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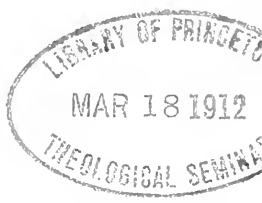
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THE BOOK

OF

THE PRIESTHOOD:

AN ARGUMENT,

IN THREE PARTS.

BY

THOMAS STRATTEN,

SUNDERLAND.

FIRST AMERICAN FROM THE FIRST LONDON EDITION.



NEW-YORK :

PUBLISHED BY JONATHAN LEAVITT.

BOSTON :

CROCKER & BREWSTER.

.....

1831.

PRINTED BY R. & G. S. WOOD, 261 PEARL-STREET.

PREFACE.

“It is necessary, frequently, to visit the ground on which Christianity was first established, to ascertain the limits and extent of the primitive faith, and to recover the parts taken by unjust violence, or lost by injudicious concession.”—*Bishop of Bristol.*

The writer of the following pages has visited that ground, for the purpose of examining the use which was made of Levitical terms and Jewish analogies in the period of primitive purity,—in the writings of those who only, in the Christian church, were intrusted with inspired authority. To himself, the visit has been deeply interesting. He has seen, and felt with a force of impression unknown by him before, that every spot of the ground is hallowed by the presence, the wisdom, the grace, and the glory of Incarnate Deity. He will

be gratified in the accomplishment of the first object of his desire, in proportion as that impression shall be obvious to the eye of those who may deem what he has written worthy their perusal. On this point, he feels that he is linked by ties of strongest sympathy with all, in whatever ecclesiastical boundaries they are included, or whatever formularies they may employ, "who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," and desire the universal proclamation of "the gospel of the grace of God."

There is however, one conviction which has resulted from his examination, in which, on its first statement, he cannot expect, to an equal extent, the sympathy and approbation of every class of Christian readers. That conviction is, that Levitical terms and Jewish analogies have been, for the most part, improperly employed in the Christian church, from a period shortly subsequent to the decease of the Apostles down to the present time ; and that the native beauty of Christianity cannot be clearly seen, nor the fulness of its consolations be generally enjoyed, nor its expansive energies be completely developed, until these terms and analogies are, in the common use, and well-informed intention of the church, restored to their original and inspired application.

The grounds of that conviction, and the consequences which they involve, fatal, as the Author con-

ceives, to the claims of any existing hierarchy, and more especially to those which are made by the Roman-catholic priesthood, are laid open in the following work. How far the conviction is well founded, and, in the present eventful state of ecclesiastical affairs, important in its communication, the public will judge.

The Author is prepared to expect, that the positions which he has advanced will pass through a fiery ordeal. So much the better. What they may include of sterling ore, from the exhaustless mine of Scripture, will abide the trial, and shine the brighter for the process. What they may include of earthly alloy—and there is no human production without a portion of such alloy—will be discovered, and separated from it.

The period has been, when the advocates of truth, unwelcome to ecclesiastical authorities, were led to the stake, and gave publicity to their principles, and displayed the firmness with which they held them, by sealing them with their blood. To run the gantlet of an interested, or hireling and abusive press, is now the moderated trial and penalty of those who would follow in their steps. From that trial, should he be called to it, the writer will not shrink. He is armed for it, by the firm persuasion of the truth of the principles which he has advocated; by the consciousness, that he has advanced through the whole extent of the open course of his argument, with unswerving integrity of

intention ; and by the hope, that the duty which he has discharged, may be of some service to the Protestant cause, and to the general interests of true Christianity.

BISHOP WEARMOUTH.

May 8, 1830.

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THE BOOK OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

PART I.

PART I.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY NOT A PRIESTHOOD.

SECTION I.

NO BASIS, LIKE THAT ON WHICH THE JEWISH PRIESTHOOD RESTED, TO SUSTAIN THE CLAIMS OF AN OFFICIAL PRIESTHOOD IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

If you enter a Roman-Catholic edifice for worship, at the hour when service is performing, what are the most prominent and imposing objects which present themselves to your view? An ALTAR, reared for the presentation of a sacrifice; and a PRIEST, officiating before it arrayed in sacerdotal vestments. You hear the priest reciting the appointed lessons, in sonorous tones, and measured cadences at the altar;—you see the expression of his devout adoration in the frequent and varied inflections of his body towards it;—you inhale the fragrant incense from the smoking censer which he waves before it;—and you behold him prepare and elevate with mysterious awe the sacrifice of the mass which is offered upon it. The existence of the altar

and the sacrifice, the presence of the priest, and the performance of priestly rites, are essential to the service. Remove them, and the light and glory are departed ;—there is then no sanctuary, nor can there be any worship. Let an interdict be laid upon some unhappy country for a crime which has been committed against the church, and with the suspension of priestly rites there is a suspension of all intercourse with heaven ; and darkness, sorrow, and despair, brood over the land. If a gleam of hope is seen through any part of the night of terror, it comes with the presence of the priest to greet the eye of the expiring penitent ; who, by an act of grace, blended with the righteous judgment of the church, is allowed to receive the last offices of religion, and thus with difficulty escapes the horrors of a remediless doom. In a country where heresy predominates, and an interdict would produce no general alarm, let an alien from the fold at the eleventh hour, and in the article of death, admit a priest to his presence and receive from his hands the rites of the church, and then, even his restoration is effected, and his salvation secured. In the sanctuary for worship, there may be a pulpit as well as an altar, but this is not essential to the service. The pulpit may be removed, and the service sustain no diminution of its efficacy or interest. The ministry of the word can never compete with the service of the altar. A priest may officiate at the altar, may perform all that is essential in the services of the church, who has never read, who

has never seen a copy of the word of God. His consecration has an authority, and the rites which he performs an efficacy, altogether independent of the Scriptures, if not irrespective of them. So that while the people are made to depend entirely upon the priest, they trust, not to his scriptural knowledge, for with "the law and the testimony" he may have had no opportunity of becoming acquainted; not to his piety or personal merit, for there may possibly be defects even in his morality; but to his official authority, and ritual performances.* There is no worship for the congregation but as he officiates at the altar;—no available confession but to his ear;—no authoritative absolution but from his lips;—no preparation for heaven, no passport to its joys, but as he performs the last offices, and with the extreme unction separates the spirit from the relations of mortality, and launches it upon its myste-

* Loose morals, and deplorable ignorance, have too generally characterized the Roman-catholic priests in South America down to the present time. Many of them never saw a copy of the Scriptures, until they were furnished with them by the Agents of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Yet, the rites of the universal church, which had been previously performed by them, were as regular, and have equal efficacy attributed to them, as have the same rites when performed by the most respectable priests of that communion who officiate in our own country.

rious voyage for eternity ;—no deliverance from the pains of purgatory, should the voyage prove adverse, and the haven of rest not be attained, but by virtue of the masses which he subsequently offers.

Now, unfounded, and irrational, though these rites and pretensions appear to the mind of the Protestant, we must not wonder, that they are contemplated in a very different light, and with very different emotions by the Catholic ;—that to his mind the rites of his religion should be fascinating, soothing, and deeply impressive. They come to him hallowed by the palpable impress of a venerable antiquity, while he is taught to derive them from the highest and most sacred authority. They carry with them the influence produced by their very extensive observance in christendom ; an observance, within what he is taught to consider the boundaries of the true church, universal. They are most skilfully adapted to the human constitution. They were successively introduced by those who well understood the weaknesses of our nature,—the easiest way of access to our passions,—the most effectual mode of binding the soul in fetters. They ally themselves with all that is splendid, imposing, and exciting in architectural skill,—in the disposition of light and shade, colour and form, —in the harmony of sounds,—in the inspirations of genius, whether embodied in the breathing marble, or impressed upon the living canvass. They address the senses, and artfully appeal through them to the yielding and captivated mind. In their observance, the imagina-

tion is excited by the associations which are connected with the objects present to the eye ; and when excited, is left to range amid all that is mysterious and profound. The breast heaves with powerful emotion, and the soul, subdued by the spell of a system which has held millions in its enchantments, complacently cherishes the persuasion, that this is devotion, and the only devotion which can be acceptable to the Most High.

Nor, in accounting for the power which the Roman-catholic system exercises over the minds of its professors, must we omit to mention the confidence of spiritual security which it inspires, and the comparatively easy and tangible means by which that security is produced. We naturally wish to be at ease in reference to our spiritual affairs, and our prospects in a future state of being ; and the system which proffers ease on the terms most acceptable to our imperfect nature, will enlist on its side the inclinations of the heart, and insensibly warp to its favour the decision of the judgment. We find the observance of outward and tangible rites less difficult than the cultivation of inward and spiritual principles ; and are therefore prepared to welcome the former, as an agreeable substitute for the latter. To this tendency of our nature the church of Rome has pre-eminently ministered. Her ritual is the most complete which the world ever possessed, and, if her own testimony upon the subject is to be received, as efficacious as can be desired. She has no less than *seven* sacraments (the number being the number of

perfection,) and each one of them of wondrous power and virtue. There is no guilt, original or actual; no defilement, inherent or casual, which she does not undertake, by some one or other of these sacraments, to remove. Let her pretensions be admitted, and the doctrine which she inculcates be received, that the rites of the church when properly administered are efficacious to salvation, and that the completeness and perfection of these rites, depend, not on the personal character, but on the official authority of the priest who administers them, and then, the mind of their recipient must be completely at rest. The path to heaven is made obvious to the very senses, and he must be scrupulous indeed who is not fully content to walk in it. Abstraction from things earthly and material,—investigation of subjects spiritual and divine,—anxious inquiry for truth,—internal conflict with the corrupt principles of our nature, are superfluous and unnecessary. Give what it requires to the church, follow the guidance and rely implicitly on the authority and work of the priest, and then all is secure.

Before, however, any rational individual ventures the tremendous risk of his eternal welfare upon this security, there are two questions which it behoves him seriously to ponder, and fully to understand. **ARE THE RITES, SO HIGHLY EXTOLLED, OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH ESSENTIAL PARTS OF CHRISTIANITY? AND, IS THE PRIEST DIVINELY AUTHORISED TO ADMINISTER THEM?** If these questions can be satisfactorily

answered in the affirmative, the writer will directly renounce his Protestant heresy, and enter, through the medium of the first priest who will receive his recantation, and give him absolution, into the bosom of the Roman Catholic church. But if they cannot be answered, and if it can be shown, that priestly rites as performed by the ministers of religion form no part of christianity; and that the priest himself has no right to the title which he assumes, no authority for the orders with which he is invested, then will it be the duty of every member of the Roman-catholic church into whose hands these pages may fall, to seek some better and surer foundation for his hope of future happiness.

Be it premised, that the appointment of a priesthood under the dispensations of religion which preceded christianity is admitted. It is admitted, that the first ministers of religion who were specially set apart from their countrymen for the service of God in holy things were priests;—that their office was of divine authority;—that its functions were sacred;—that no individual who was not lineally descended from Aaron, and duly consecrated according to the appointed forms, could lawfully enter on their discharge. It is admitted, that before Aaron was consecrated, not only Melchizedec who blessed Abraham, but also that Abraham himself was a priest;—that the head of every family by which God was worshipped according to the rites of his own institution, was a priest;—that he had an altar for his household, and, what ever was and ever

must be essential to a priesthood, a sacrifice to offer to God upon it. It is admitted, that in this respect, the Catholic priest is more consistent than the Protestant who wears the title, and calls the table at which he officiates an altar, but disclaims the power of presenting on it an oblation or sacrifice. The Protestant altar, if not erected, like that at Athens, to an unknown God, is erected for an unknown purpose. The Catholic church has this inducement for those who desire "priest's orders," that in it they may find a complete office.

But, before an individual, who wishes fully to understand the ground of every step which he takes, will seek "priest's orders" any where, or repose any confidence on priestly rites by whomsoever performed, he will require to be shown the scriptural authority by which, under the *christian dispensation*, the office is sustained, and the rites are discharged. The reasonableness of such a requirement must at once be seen and felt. There have been so many impositions practised upon men under the name and profession of religion, in all ages, and in almost all countries, that caution, in surrendering ourselves to religious orders of men, rather than unhesitating and implicit credence, becomes a duty:—a duty, enforced not only by the reason of the case, and the immensely important interests which it involves, but also by the direct injunctions of the Saviour and his apostles. "Take heed that no man deceive you." "Prove all things; hold

fast that which is good." "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone into the world."

More especially will every minister of religion, who is enlightened, honest, and sincere, be desirous that these precepts should be fully enforced. He will resent the impositions which have been practised by others, and be ready, cheerfully and promptly, to give a reason for every official title which he wears, and every part of the work which he performs. He will be concerned, so far as in him lies, to keep his conscience before God as the noon-day clear, and his character for sincerity and integrity before men, unimpeached and unimpeachable. He will not, with a christian name and office, yield pre-eminence, in any moral respect, to a Jewish priest, who, be it remembered, could discharge all the functions of his office, without the embarrassment of a single conscientious scruple in his own mind, without a rational ground for suspicion, which could desecrate him in the eyes of others.

Had a Jewish priest been asked for the origin of the office which he sustained, he could have produced the Book of the Law, and have pointed with his finger to the express passage of institution. He could have given full and explicit quotations, not only in support of the title and authority of the office itself; but also, descriptions in detail of every particular which related to its services, and even of the vestments which were

to be worn in its discharge. Had he been asked for his own individual and particular right to execute the office, he could have produced the genealogical tables, and have led the inquirer, ascending or descending through every link of the chain which connected him with God's first anointed—Aaron. Had he been asked for the authority of any of the varied rites which he performed, he could again, in every instance, have referred to the specific and divine prescription. But, if we turn to those who wear the title, pretend to the office, and perform the rites of a priest in the Christian church, and ask them to show us, in the New Testament, the specific institution of their office;—to prove their descent, natural or ecclesiastical, from any priest who ever officiated, by God's appointment, in heaven or earth;—to give us divine prescription for the rites which they discharge;—we ask for that which no priest in existence can produce,—we present a difficulty which cannot be satisfactorily removed,—we lay naked to the eye the fallacy and impotence of names and pretensions derived from another dispensation of religion, without the comprehension of its principles, or the firm basis of its authority and facts. In no particular has the church and the world been more extensively and injuriously misled, than in ministerial pretensions derived from Judaism. These pretensions were introduced into the Christian church at a very early period of its history, and were the source from which the greater part of its subsequent corrup-

tions flowed.* So long as they remain in any of their modifications, christianity will be encumbered with that which is incongruous with its nature, which obscures its lustre, fetters its liberty, and confuses the interesting and instructive relation which the two sys-

* “The Christian doctors had the good fortune to persuade the people, that the ministers of the Christian church succeeded to the character, rights and privileges, of the Jewish priesthood: and this persuasion was a new source both of honours and profit to the sacred order. This notion was propagated with industry some time after the reign of Adrian, when the second destruction of Jerusalem had extinguished among the Jews all hopes of seeing their government restored to its former lustre, and their country arising out of its ruins. And, accordingly, the bishops considered themselves as invested with a rank and character similar to those of the high-priest among the Jews, while the presbyters represented the priests, and the deacons the Levites. It is indeed highly probable, that they who first introduced this absurd comparison of offices, so entirely distinct, did it rather through ignorance and error than through artifice or design. The notion, however, once introduced, produced its natural effects; and these effects were pernicious. The errors to which it gave rise were many; and one of its immediate consequences was, the establishing a greater difference between the christian pastors and their flock than the genius of the gospel seems to admit.”—*Mosheim*, Cent. II. chap. ii. sect. 4.

tems, coming from the same hand, and comprised in the one volume of inspiration, bear to each other.

The difficulty as it has already been stated, which lies in the way of an individual who would substantiate his right to the priestly office in the Christian church, on an analogy drawn from Judaism, is insurmountable. He can produce no inspired warrant of institution,—no genealogical table of descent,—no divine prescription of priestly rites. But the case is not yet presented in the whole of its strength. As the Christian dispensation is the last in order of time which has been given to the world; so is it allowed by all, to be the clearest in light, and most abounding in privileges. “Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.” “When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” As it is the last dispensation, and the best, so it is the most comprehensive in its character, and permanent in its duration. It is designed and adapted, it was prophetically promised, and has been authoritatively instituted for the whole race of mankind, and the whole duration of the world in which they dwell. Now, under such a dispensation, intended for the world, involving the destinies of the unnumbered millions of its coming generations, embodying for their enjoyment the clearest light which God ever intends to vouchsafe to men upon earth,—if, under such a dispensation, salvation

were to be obtained through the medium of the official rites of an earthly priesthood, might we not expect that the authority and ritual of that priesthood, would, at least, be equally clear with the authority and ritual of the Jewish priesthood? Would not the immensely expanding, the infinitely multiplying interests involved in the one case, warrant us to expect, if it were possible, prescriptions even more explicit, sanctions even more incontrovertible than in the other? But what are the facts of the respective cases? Why, when we open the Old Testament, the priesthood, under its proper designation, and in some or other of its branches or engagements, lives and moves before us in almost every page; while one entire book, and a considerable portion of others, are occupied by the arrangement of its services. If, however, we open the New Testament, and search through it from beginning to end, we shall find, respecting the institution of an earthly priesthood for the Christian church—*not a word*; the title of priest* applied to designate any minister of

* ἱερεὺς. From the root of which comes Hierarchy.

In the public discussion which took place in Dublin, April, 1827, between Mr. Pope and Mr. Maguire, the latter was challenged to shew, that ἱερεὺς, the term employed to designate a priest of the old law, was ever applied in the New Testament to a minister of the Christian church. After some quibbling about a passage in the Revelations, Mr. Maguire offered to submit the question

the Christian religion—*not once* ; reference to priestly rites as discharged by one man for others—*not one*. That the writers of the New Testament employ no Levitical terms in their numerous references to the office and work of the Christian ministry, will appear the more remarkable, when it is remembered, that they had themselves been educated in the bosom of the Jewish church,—that their earliest religious associations were connected with the work of its priesthood,—and, that on almost every other subject, Levitical analogies evidently presented themselves with spontaneous exuberance to their minds, and are most freely and beautifully recorded by their pens. It was only when writing upon that subject, in illustration of which, if modern ideas be correct, these analogies might have been employed with most propriety and effect, that they carefully abstain from their use ;—or rather, the current of their thoughts in reference to

to the adjudication of any two individuals, and named as his own referee Counsellor Clinch. But Counsellor Clinch subsequently declined giving an opinion on the case.—Vide *Report of the Discussion*, p. 373. If, therefore, the unlearned Catholic finds the ministers of the church sometimes called priests, in the translation of the New Testament which is provided for him ; those of his own communion, who are acquainted with the original, know that the word there employed is improperly rendered.

the Christian ministry flowed in channels so different from those which have been subsequently opened, that they never occurred in this connexion to their minds.

SECTION II.

NO PRIESTHOOD INCLUDED, EITHER IN THE INCIPIENT,
OR THE COMPLETE AND FINAL APOSTOLIC COMMISSION.

THAT we may not appear to rest our conclusions on general assertions, instead of a careful induction of facts, it may be desirable to examine in detail, the provision made by the Saviour, in his supreme authority as the Head of the Church, for the publication of his religion to the world. This examination is the more necessary, as it will lead us to investigate the foundation of claims which have been associated with the priesthood, equally doubtful in their character, and questionable in their origin.

The first step towards the appointment of a ministry for the Christian church, is certainly to be found in the sending forth of the twelve, whose names and instructions are given at large by Matthew, in the tenth chapter of his gospel. Their commission is contained in the seventh and eighth verses,—“And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”

Now, it will be remembered, that when this commission was given, the Jewish priests were still officiating, in the order of their courses, and according to the appointed ritual, in the only place where a priest could discharge the duties of his functions—the temple. To that temple, the Saviour himself, that he might fulfil all righteousness, was accustomed to repair; and, with his disciples, to unite in its services and festivals. There was, then, no intrusion on the office of the priest in the commission which was given to the twelve. No ephod, breast-plate, or mitre, was provided for them, (with changes of *ordinary* raiment they were not to encumber themselves,)—no oil was poured upon their heads,—no blood was sprinkled upon their persons or their garments;—the temple was not to be the scene of their ministry, but the whole land of Judea;—to the altar they received no right to approach;—with sacrifice or incense no authority to intermeddle. They were to preach, and to work miracles in confirmation of the message which they delivered.

Mark gives us a brief account of the execution of their commission: “And they went out, and preached that men should repent, and they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.”* The anointing of the *sick* with oil, though it has been adopted as a rite of the Roman-

* Mark vi. 12, 13.

catholic church, formed no part of the ritual which was discharged by the Jewish priesthood; and was therefore no invasion of the office, no encroachment on the work of the priest. With what consistency it has been converted into a priestly rite in the Roman-catholic church, will be sufficiently seen, when the correspondence of the cases is considered. The Apostles, in the exercise of the *miraculous* powers with which they were invested, anointed with oil many that were sick, *to heal them*. And James, in his general Epistle, says, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church," (miraculous powers being also possessed by those, on whom for their conveyance the hands of an Apostle had been laid,) "and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, *and the Lord shall raise him up.*"* The Catholic priest anoints with oil, only at the moment when recovery is deemed impossible, not miraculously to restore the sick to health, but peacefully to dismiss him from the world!

If it were necessary to assign a reason, why Protestants in no case anoint the sick with oil, it would be sufficient to say, that it is the same which prevents them from anointing with clay the eyes of the blind. The anointing in both cases, whether performed by the Saviour or his Apostles, was a significant action, connect-

* James v. 14, 15.

ed with the exercise of miraculous powers. The one was, no more than the other, intended to be a perpetual rite in the Christian church. When the Catholic priesthood can open the eyes of the blind, then they may introduce another rite, and anoint with clay; and when they possess an unction by which they can *heal* the sick, then we shall be glad to receive their offices, and dismiss the physician.

After the twelve had been commissioned, other seventy also were appointed. But their work and instructions corresponded with what had before been given to the twelve. It was an increase of labourers on the apostolic, not the priestly, model. The apostolic model itself, however, wanted yet its finishing stroke. It had been framed hitherto for Judea only; it was to be made sufficiently expansive to embrace the world. Thus extensive was the commission made after the Saviour's resurrection: "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."*

* Matt. xxviii. 16—20.

Now, at the time when this commission was given, the Jewish priesthood was virtually abolished. The Saviour had finished the work, which the sacrifices they had been accustomed to offer had prefigured. He, the "Lamb of God," had shed his own blood to take away the sin of the world. He had offered his own body once for all. When, therefore, he had given up the ghost, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. The most holy place,—in which the mysterious symbols of a present Deity, the lambent flame of fire hovering over the mercy-seat, and between the wings of the cherubim, had been previously enshrined,—was laid open to the public gaze. The glory was departed, never more to return. Deity, there being none henceforth in the temple to propitiate, sacrifice and priest were there alike without an object, and in vain. The priests might retain their names and their vestments, might slay their victims and present their smoking censers, might chant their songs, and offer their intercessions as before ; but there was no eye complacently to witness, no ear well pleased to listen, no voice in mercy to answer, no radiance, indicative of divine favour, to spread around the scene of their service, no streams of blessings to make glad the place once holy, but now desecrated, and doomed to the approaching curse. God had departed ; and the priesthood, in respect to the purposes for which he had appointed it, was already defunct. The lifeless body indeed yet remained in its vestments, like royalty in the

funereal chamber ; but the torch of the Roman soldier was enkindling, to fire the devoted pile, and reduce both the priesthood and the temple to ashes, which the winds of heaven should scatter, and which no power on earth should be able to gather together again.

If then, at any time, the office of the priesthood were transferred to the Christian church, this surely, when the Jewish priesthood was in effect abolished, would have been the period. If any men have been invested with its functions, the eleven, when receiving their commission, would have been the first. No rites of consecration were however, on this occasion, performed. The eleven came to Christ at the place where he had appointed to meet them, in their usual attire, the raiment commonly worn by their countrymen, and they departed in the same garb. They received from Christ, not the vessels or implements of a worldly service, not the insignia of political or ecclesiastical authority, nothing which could charm the eye, or captivate the sense ; they received only the breath of his lips—the words of his mouth. The words however were spirit and life. They could effect, what no ritual has the power to accomplish, the illumination of the understanding, the invigoration of the heart, the transformation of the whole character. They could, and did, make the men who had been struck dumb with astonishment, who had trembled with fear, who had fled like affrighted sheep, in the hour of their Master's sufferings, bold as lions in his cause, ready to go to the

ends of the earth at his command, and prompt to bear their testimony for him with celestial fervour, before the kings and rulers of the earth, who were leagued together against him. Those who would give proof of their call to the Christian ministry, should show it, in the developement of a portion of the same spirit. In this way only can they commend themselves to the confidence and regard of those, who understand the nature of the Christian dispensation, and are conversant with the oracles of truth. In this way only can they retain their influence in a world, fast growing out of the state of its childhood, in which it could be amused with spectacles and toys, and thirsting for knowledge, principle, and truth. In this way only can they prove, that they are moved by the Holy Ghost to serve Christ in the ministry of his gospel, and that they have a right to any of the official titles which they wear.

The religion which Christ came to introduce, and which he sent his Apostles through the world to teach, was to have no affinity with what one of them designates, "weak and beggarly elements." The expressive character of these terms, which Paul applies to the rites of Judaism, shows how abhorrent to his mind was a relapse of the members of the Christian church, to that state of bondage to the senses under which the Jewish church had been held. The time of reformation was come; and the meats, and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances of the law of ceremonies, were for ever to pass away. The human

mind was, by the religion of the gospel, to be emancipated from its shackles, and purged from its grossness and darkness. It was to come forth into light and liberty, and to enter on an endless career of moral and intellectual improvement. A new and living way of access was opened to God, who is the Father of lights, that by daily intercourse with him, the soul might become assimilated to his image, and be prepared for the beatific enjoyment of his presence. The design of the religion which Christ sent his Apostles to teach, is no where more clearly unfolded, nor its spirit of elevated and expansive benevolence any where more fervently breathed, than in that comprehensive passage, which was written by "the disciple whom Jesus loved:—" "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things *write* we unto you, that your joy may be full."* And, as in what they writé, no reference to the existence of Levitical ceremonies in the Christian church can be found, but that, in which their introduction is censured, and their continuance forbidden, we may be assured, that in what they taught to the nations of the world with the living voice, they were consistent with what they have communicated to us, and to all the generations of mankind, in the imperishable productions of their pen. And, if

* 1 John i. 3, 4.

what they wrote was to produce the fulness of joy ; then we may also be assured, that we have in their writings the substance of all which they taught. So that we may come to the examination of the next topic suggested by the commission which they received, prepared to learn, what were the things which they were commanded to teach, not from traditionary fables, but from the pages of their own writings : the true and lively oracles, the word inspired by God, which, like himself, liveth and abideth for ever.

SECTION III.

NO PRIESTHOOD REQUIRED FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF THE RITUAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

CONNECTED with the consideration of the apostolic commission, is the question, What ritual observances are actually enjoined under the Christian dispensation? One of these, the rite of initiation, is specified in the commission: "Teach all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Now, the rite of baptism formed no part of the divinely authorised institutions of the Jewish priesthood; nor was even the corresponding rite of initiation into the Jewish church (the rite of circumcision), performed by the priesthood. The rite of circumcision was a much older institution than that of the Jewish priesthood, nor, when the latter was appointed, did Aaron, or his sons, receive any commission to interfere with its performance. It remained, as it was before, a domestic, and not a priestly rite. It was discharged in the dwelling of the parents of the child, not in the temple of worship. Its administration was entrusted to the father of the child, or to whomsoever, as more skilful than himself, he might choose to employ.

The rite of baptism, moreover, had been previously administered by John, who, though he was the descendant of a priest, had yet never himself entered on the discharge of the office, nor was even accustomed to visit the temple. He was in the wilderness until the time of his showing to Israel, and then appeared to the multitude which thronged to his baptism, not in the vestments of a priest, but in the rough garb which had been worn by the ancient prophets. That he, who was descended from a priest, and legally entitled to claim his consecration, and officiate in his course in the temple, should make no pretensions to the office, but appear in another character, seemed itself to indicate that the earthly priesthood was now waning to extinction ;—that among the ministers of that Saviour, of whom John was the herald, the office was to have no existence. The injunction of the baptismal rite, then, involves no argument for the necessity of a Christian priesthood to administer it ; since neither its performance, nor that of the corresponding rite of circumcision, was ever, by divine appointment, connected with the office of a priest.

The only other rite which they anywhere tell us they were commanded to enjoin, was the Lord's supper. And nothing can be more simple, or foreign from the pomp of priestly rites, than this institution, as it is presented to us in the New Testament. The repeated references which are made to it, not only exclude altogether the notion of a priest and a sacrifice,

but they do not even suppose the existence of any *authoritative* official administration. It was delivered to the disciples, in their incorporation as a church, to observe; not to those who sustained office in the church to administer. That at its celebration, the officers of the church would preside and superintend its arrangements, would become a matter of course, and be essential to its being discharged in all respects decently and in order. But then, the duty of its observance is not so much connected with their ministerial work, as with the responsibility of the whole church over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. The obligation to set forth Christ crucified in the preaching of the word, rests upon the ministers of the church; the obligation to show forth the Lord's death till he come, in the observance of the supper, rests upon the members of which each individual church is composed, and appears to be one interesting and important part of the design contemplated by their Lord and Master, in their incorporation.

The First Epistle to the Corinthians is inscribed, "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Connect this—keeping in view the persons to whom the epistle is addressed—with the declaration which is given in the eleventh chapter: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord

Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread : and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is my body, which is broken for you ; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood ; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."*

In exact accordance with this passage will be found the references to the Lord's supper which are contained in the Acts of the Apostles. It is invariably represented as a rite observed by the disciples ; never, as officially administered to them. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized : and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread."† A distinction between the two rites, in the mode of participation, is here clearly marked. Baptism was administered to them ; the bread of the Lord's supper was broken by them. Of the former they were the recipients ; the celebration of the latter was their united and cheerful performance. At that bright opening of the Christian era, when the stupendous facts of redemption were fresh in every individual's personal recollection ;—when impending civil commotions loos-

* Verses 23—26. † Acts ii. 41, 42.

ened men's minds from their worldly occupations, and rendered precarious their continuance in their earthly possessions;—when the exciting influence of miraculous occurrences was daily felt;—when apostolic simplicity and fervour breathed in the ministry of the word;—when copious effusions of grace came on the disciples with refreshing influence from the presence of the Lord;—their minds were so occupied and absorbed by spiritual things, that every day was a day of holy and joyful celebration; and the house of every believer furnished a table, at which some portion of the church could assemble, and enjoy the cup of blessing in the communion of the blood of Christ, and break bread in token of their communion in the body of Christ. “And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

There is another reference to the Lord's supper given, in connection with a visit which the Apostle

* Acts ii. 43, 47.

Paul made to the church at Troas. He waited at this place until the first day of the week, because then, in pursuance of their usual custom, the disciples came together to break bread. If any peculiar importance had been attached, at this period of the church, to the official administration of the elements of the Lord's supper, it would surely, in some way or other, have been indicated on this occasion when the ministry of an Apostle is described in connection with its celebration. But what is the plain fact of the case? His participating with the disciples in the supper is not omitted by the inspired narrator. Had it been, each individual might have derived his own inference, varying with the theory upon the general subject which he had previously received. But it *is* recorded, and in the same terms which are employed to characterize the ordinary celebration by the disciples themselves. They "came together to break bread;" and, "when he was come up again, and had *broken bread*, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed."* Whatever distinctions he possessed in office and gifts, at the supper of the Lord he stood not apart from the disciples as more holy or privileged than they, but was among them as one of themselves: practically recognizing the relation which they sustained to him as his brethren: members of one family,

* Acts xx. 11.

—and united, by the same spiritual ties, to one common and glorious Head.

If any thing more were necessary to disconnect this part of the Christian ritual from the work of a priesthood, it would be found in the fact, that the corresponding rite of the Jewish church was, like that of circumcision, a domestic, and not a priestly rite. The Passover, as well as circumcision, was instituted before the priesthood was appointed. After it was appointed, no injunction restricted, to those who discharged its functions, the right of killing the paschal lamb. Though, when the people were led into the possession of the land which had been promised to them, the feast could be celebrated only at the place where the sanctuary of worship was established; yet the lamb was not presented upon the altar, but upon the table of each household, in its own settled or temporary dwelling. No portion of it went to the priest, but each domestic party feasted upon its own victim; and if any thing remained from it at the conclusion of the supper, it might not be left till the morning, but was to be consumed in the fire. It was immediately after he had eaten of the Passover with his disciples, and at the same table on which the paschal lamb had been placed, that the Saviour instituted his own supper. The bread and the wine were to supersede the lamb, and to be the visible memorials of the dying love of our departed Lord;—of Christ, our Passover, who was sacrificed for us.

And the ejection of the priest, and the reduction of the altar to a table, explodes that master-piece of human ingenuity and effrontery, the imposing fiction of transubstantiation. For if there be no priest to effect the marvellous transformation, the elements must remain, as the Apostle describes them to have been, even after the Saviour's giving of thanks,—the *bread* which we eat, and the *cup* which we drink; evidently so to the eye, and demonstrably so to any who will submit them to the test of a chemical process.

Should we be told, that the deductions of reason, and the evidence of the senses, on a subject so sublime and mysterious, must be alike rejected; and that the doctrine is proposed to faith, and upheld by the plain declaration of our Redeemer, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,”—we answer, That those who take this declaration literally, must place themselves on a level in understanding with the blind and carnal Jews, who were offended with it; that those who take the words sacramentally,—who suppose that they refer to the bread and wine of the Lord's supper, must be prepared to admit that no individual was or could be, when they were delivered, nor for a considerable period afterwards, in the possession of life:—that none of the twelve, not even Peter himself, was in the possession of life. They must be prepared to admit, that none of the promises of life, which the Saviour had hitherto given, had been, or could have been ful-

filled :—that the great purpose for which Christ came into the world, which was to give life, had as yet, in the case of no individual, been accomplished ; *because, as yet, there was no such thing as the Lord's supper in existence.* This sufficient and palpable reason entirely excludes the *sacramental* meaning which the words have been supposed to involve. It was impossible that they could refer to an institution which then was not in being ; and about the intended appointment of which not even a hint had yet been given. More excusable were the Jews who took the words literally, than are those who, understanding the *chronology* of the New Testament, take them sacramentally. They libel the Saviour's character as a teacher, and nullify his grace and faithfulness as a Redeemer. If their interpretation of the words be a true one, every gift which the Saviour had previously conferred must have been withdrawn, and the declaration which he delivered must have been an inexplicable riddle, which no creature then in existence could by any possibility have made out. They must be taken metaphorically and spiritually ; as referring to truth, of which Christ is the substance, and on which, by coming to him, the soul must daily feed : and then will there be found in them, according to his own assurance, spirit and life. Experiencing their quickening influence, we shall feel under them, as Peter did when he heard them : knowing nothing about a sacrament in them, we shall come to Christ with powerful emotion, saying “ Lord, to

whom shall we go? thou hast the *words* of eternal life."*

On the ritual observances of the church, as specified or involved in the commission given by the Redeemer to his Apostles, we have sufficiently enlarged to show, that there is in them no affinity with priestly rites; as in the commission itself there is nothing to countenance the claims of a Christian priesthood.

* John vi. 68.

SECTION IV.

NO PRIESTHOOD CONFERRED IN THE PERSONAL AUTHORITY
WITH WHICH THE APOSTLES WERE INVESTED.

BEFORE the Apostles received the comprehensive commission which was given to them at a mountain in Galilee, where by special appointment they had been convened to meet the Saviour, and which, in its most essential part—teaching, they execute by their writings to the present day, and will to the end of the world; their divine Master had, on the very evening of his resurrection, when he unexpectedly appeared as a friend amongst them, invested them with authority to tread in his own steps, and, by the exercise of miraculous powers, to become his representatives in the world:—

“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you:

as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost : whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them : and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”*

In the Saviour’s own mission from the Father to our world was fulfilled the prediction which had been given by Isaiah : “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn.”† In the synagogue of Nazareth, therefore, at an early stage of his public ministry, he read the passage from the scroll of the prophetic book, and applied it to himself ; while the miracles which he performed were the credentials which he presented, and the warrant for faith in him to which he appealed. “Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest ; because I said I am the Son of God ? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works ; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.”‡

* John xx. 19—23.

† Isai. lxi. 1—3.

‡ John x. 36—38.

Now, when the Saviour in sending forth his Apostles declared to them, that their mission from him corresponded with his from the Father ; and attended that declaration with significantly breathing on them, and communicating the Holy Ghost ; we may certainly consider him as transferring to them the prophetic description which had already been fulfilled in his own personal ministry, to be fulfilled also in theirs ; and as furnishing them with the same credentials to present “mighty signs and wonders, wrought by the power of the Spirit of God.”

In the Redeemer’s intercourse with his Apostles during the period of his own personal ministry, he gave them a distinct intimation, that, on its close, and his consequent departure, they should be abundantly furnished for the mission on which he was about to send them. In reply to a request from Philip, he said to them all, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do ; because I go unto my Father.”* And that the promise was literally fulfilled, two passages of the narrator of their Acts will sufficiently prove : “And by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people ; insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that, at the least, the shadow of Peter passing by might

* John xiv. 12.

overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.”*
 “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.”†

Thus far, the general outline of their personal mission is clear; and their possession of satisfactory credentials, obvious. That part of the Saviour’s declaration to them, which relates to the remitting and retaining sins, demands a careful and distinct consideration.

It may safely be assumed, that, since the Acts and Epistles contain such distinct and repeated references to every other part of the work which, as Apostles, they discharged; so also some evident traces must remain in the same books, of what they performed in execution of this extraordinary power conveyed to them; and consequently, that any modern practice supposed to be warranted by this passage, but of which no indication can be discovered in the apostolic writings, must be of very questionable character, on two accounts: the want of a direct and personal apostolic commission by him who performs it; and the want of resemblance to any recorded apostolic function, supposing the trans-

* Acts v. 12, 15, 16.

† Acts xix. 11, 12.

mission of the same authority could be demonstrated. Now, for any thing corresponding with absolution, as declared indefinitely after general confession to an assembled congregation, or pronounced authoritatively to a kneeling penitent, or prostrate patient, we search in vain through the pages of the New Testament. But, can we point to any functions which the Apostles are declared to have discharged, and which contain a satisfactory exemplification of the power which was committed to them to retain and remit sins? We think we can.

Be it premised, that when Peter made his divinely prompted confession of the Saviour's Deity, besides the promise which was made to him, that he should receive the keys of the kingdom; he was also told, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."* The power of binding and loosing was subsequently promised to the other Apostles, and connected with the discipline which was to be exercised in the church: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell

* Matt. xvi. 19.

it unto the church : but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* Now, in the case supposed in this passage, the church might take cognizance of the offence, might speak with authority to the offender, might, if he proved incorrigible, exclude him from its communion ; but the power of binding or loosing is something additional to its discipline, and the execution of which is intrusted exclusively to the Apostles. Whatsoever *ye*—not the church—shall bind ; and whatsoever *ye* shall loose, shall be bound or loosed in heaven.

An illustration of what is meant by binding and loosing, may be derived from our Saviour’s declaration on one of the occasions, when he vindicated his conduct in performing a miracle of healing on the Sabbath-day. “Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath *bound*, lo, these eighteen years, be *loosed* from this bond on the Sabbath-day ?” † In this case, the binding was the infliction of supernatural disease, by the permitted agency of Satanic power ; the loosing was the deliverance of the victim, and the restoration to health, by the removal of the distempered bond. On more than one occasion, we find the Apostles exercising the power of binding, by delivering in-

* Matt. xviii. 15—18.

† Luke xiii. 16.

corrigible offenders to be afflicted by Satanic agency for the punishment of the flesh. But, the case which touches every point, and illustrates, combines, and harmonizes every part of this subject, is that of the incestuous person at Corinth:—

“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”* The injunction of the Apostle was obeyed by the church. The offender was excluded,—given up for the correction of his vice, as Job had been for the trial of his faith, to Satanic power over the flesh, made contrite for his sin, and in danger of being “swallowed up with over-much sorrow.”† The command was then given by the Apostle to restore him to the communion of the church, with the assurance, “To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also.”‡

* 1 Cor. v. 1—5. † 2 Cor. ii. 7. ‡ 2 Cor. ii. 10.

In the directions relative to this case, the duty of the church and the extent of its power, irrespective of apostolic interference, are clearly marked out. 'Its members should have mourned, on account of the defilement and dishonour brought on their body by the incestuous member, and the scandal presented as a stumbling-block to the world; and they should have shown their abhorrence of the sin which had been committed, by putting away from among them the wicked person. The reproof which they received, implies, that they could, and should have done this, but nothing more. The special illumination of an Apostle in the knowledge of a case which required discipline, and guiding to an infallible decision, as well as the power to bind temporal punishment upon the offender, is indicated in the positive injunction to deliver at once the judgment which he transmitted; and to connect it with his authority as present in spirit, and invested with the power derived from the Lord Jesus. So long as the supernatural and distempered bond lay upon the offender, his sin was evidently retained;—retained by the authority which had delivered him over to Satanic agency. And when, by that same power, the sin was remitted and forgiven, the bond would be loosed, and the restored penitent be returned to soundness of body, as well as comfort of mind. We see, then, that the power of retaining sins which was conveyed to the Apostles, was exemplified, in their binding supernatural diseases upon the bodies of those offenders who

were the subjects of ecclesiastical discipline ; the judgment which they suffered making it evident that sin unpardoned lay upon them : and that the power of forgiving sins was exemplified in the loosing of the dis-tempered bond, which was an evident indication of their restored peace with God, and their being qualified to enjoy renewed communion with the church.

This power was vested in the Apostles, for the purpose of securing their authority in an infant church in which no precedents were established, nor habits of obedience formed ; while it was effectually guarded from misapplication and abuse, by the gift of discerning spirits which they possessed, and the plenary inspiration, by which, in every case of its exercise, they were guided. It was exercised by Peter in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. To his eye was exposed, by special revelation, all the circumstances of the sin which they had agreed together in committing ; and while his voice was delivering the rebuke, first one, and then the other, fell down dead. This was the first, and severest example of the exercise of the power ; and its effect was correspondent, and, without doubt, immensely beneficial on the interests of the rising church. That deference, which in cases requiring discipline, has been subsequently yielded by every well-regulated church to apostolic authority, conveyed through apostolic writings, as the result of fixed and established principles, was here, before principles had had time to root themselves, secured at once by a most painful and awful

stroke : “ And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard of these things.”* In no other case do we read of death being inflicted ; and from Paul’s declaration to the Corinthians on this subject, we learn that this authority which the Lord had given to the Apostles, was for “ edification, and not destruction.”† That was, doubtless, the invariable design for which it was exerted ; and, either to the offenders who suffered its effects, or to the church which witnessed them, the unfailing result.

The power, however, belonged exclusively to the apostolic, never to the priestly, office. Its exercise was connected with the possession of plenary inspiration and miraculous gifts ; never with the discharge of priestly rites. If there were any persons in the church who could give us proof, that they have the gift of discerning spirits, and the power of inflicting supernatural diseases upon the refractory individuals who dispute their authority, we might on these grounds allow them to be the successors of the Apostles ; but not even then could we admit, that they are the successors of the priests. The two offices were distinct and incompatible. That which we may be allowed to say excites our surprise, is, that men revered for their mental endowments, but making no pretensions to the possession of miraculous powers, should assume themselves to be the legitimate successors of the Apostles, and priests in

* Acts v. 11.

† 2 Cor. xiii, 10.

addition! Not a ray of special illumination, nor a particle of supernatural power, yet legitimate successors of the Apostles! Not a line of divine prescription for such an office, yet priests! Successors of the Apostles, and priests also! What a commingling, and confounding of differing dispensations, and differing and incompatible offices! What a dereliction of all sound principles of scriptural interpretation do these extraordinary assumptions display! Surely, softer names than schismatics and heretics should be applied to those, who unhappily cannot understand how the persons who make these assumptions have become, either their authorized teachers or infallible guides;—whose consciences (perhaps too scrupulous) cannot submit to claims which they imagine they can give good reasons to show, have no foundation in the word of God.

Besides, we think we can show, not only that these claims have no solid foundation in holy scripture, but also, that they are inconsistent one with another.

It should be remembered, that to the Jewish priesthood was never intrusted the power of absolution,—the word was never heard officially in the temple;—was never expressed to a penitential worshipper by a priest who there officiated, though he could, and did, by divine appointment, offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. The word was first sounded in Jewish ears, from the lips of him who came to introduce another dispensation of religion; when, in the exercise of his divine prerogative, he said to the man who was sick of the

palsy, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." So unusual and strange did this declaration appear to the scribes, whose occupation it was to write out copies of the law, and who must therefore have been familiar with its letter, that they said, "This man blasphemeth." "Who can forgive sins but God only?" He vindicated himself from the charge of blasphemy in the words which he employed, by the miracle of healing which he performed on the man whose sins he had forgiven. And we have shown, that when he gave to his Apostles the power of retaining or remitting sins, he enabled them to prove that they really possessed it, in a very similar way ; by binding or loosing supernatural diseases, in the case of those on whom the power was exercised.

The inconsistency which we refer to, lies here ; that while the power of absolution is claimed in virtue of an assumed succession from the Apostles, its exercise is limited to those who possess the title and office of priest. According to the theory of succession, so soon as the hands of a lineal representative of the Apostles have been laid upon the head of a candidate for holy orders, he is adopted into the ecclesiastical family ;—the grace of an apostolic succession is devolved upon him ;—he has authority to discharge the apostolic work of teaching, baptizing, and conducting the devotions of the people ; but then, he must not receive the confession of a penitent, and remove his fears by saying to him, "I absolve thee from all thy sins," until he can

also consecrate the elements of the supper, or present the sacrifice of the altar, by becoming invested with the full orders of the priesthood. So that, he must not exercise a power which he professes to derive from the Apostles, until he has obtained an office which they never possessed, and with which it can be demonstrated, that the work of absolution was never connected!

The unauthorized practice of absolution, and the inconsistency, if it is performed, of limiting it to the office of the priest, are only steps by which we approach a still more serious assumption, and what we cannot but consider a still more daring invasion of divine prerogative.

While the priest declares, that he has authority to say to a fellow sinner kneeling or prostrate before him, what it cannot be shown that the Apostles themselves ever ventured to affirm, and the power to say which there is good reason for believing was never meant to be included in the extraordinary commission which they received,—“I absolve thee from all thy sins;”—the bishop, in conferring the orders of the priest, raises his mitre to the throne of the Saviour himself, and uses the very language which the divine Redeemer employed in conferring the plenitude of miraculous powers and apostolic functions. “*Pontifex com mitra sedens super faldistorium, ante medium altaris, imponit ambas manus super capita singulorum coram eo genuflectentium, dicens cuilibet.*

“*Accipe Spiritum Sanctum : quorum remiseras peccata, remittuntur eis ; et quorum retinueris, retenta sunt.*”*

Whatever regret may be felt on its account, the fact cannot be concealed, that in this particular, there are Protestants, who closely follow in Roman-catholic steps. The passage which we have quoted from the Roman Pontifical, is in substance included, in the form of ordination still observed in the English episcopal church : “Then the bishop, with the priests present, shall lay their hands severally upon the head of every one that receiveth the order of priesthood, the receivers humbly kneeling upon their knees, and the bishop saying ; Receive the Holy Ghost, for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed unto thee, by the imposition of our hands : whose sins thou dost remit, they are remitted ; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained : and be thou a faithful dispenser of the word of God, and of his holy sacraments, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

* “The Pontiff, with the mitre, sitting upon the faldstool, before the middle of the altar, lays both hands upon the head of each of those who are kneeling before him, and says to each : ‘Receive thou the Holy Ghost : whosoever sins thou remittest, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever thou retainest, they are retained.’”

At this point, the attitude of the English church is singular. With one hand she holds the skirt of the Roman matron, and claims affinity to her,—an affinity, however, which the jealous matron, too severely dignified, refuses to acknowledge :—with the other hand, she uncourteously repels those, who might otherwise presume to imagine that they bore some relation to her, and be disposed to cherish regard for her. The Roman-catholic priest may enter her communion, and engage in her ministrations, without confessing the inadequacy of the ordination which he had previously received, and seeking additional authority from her hand ; the pastor, or presbyter, of any of the varied Protestant communions cannot be so received. He must disown, as unauthorized, every part of his previous ministerial work, and repudiate as unlawful every other religious communion ; must be free from the suspicion of having recently desecrated himself by being present in a conventicle during the period of worship, before he can be even invested with her diaconal orders, or be allowed to perform the humblest clerical service which her ritual prescribes.

How far the general interests of the Protestant cause, or the particular interests of the episcopal church, are affected by this unhappy combination of questionable claims with uncharitable implications, it is not the province of the writer to decide. It is sufficient, that in the prosecution of his argument, as in fairness and duty he was bound to do, he has stated the fact. Until the

particulars included in the claims are identified with apostolic practice, are substantiated in their transmission by explicit apostolic authority, or are accompanied in their exercise with the miraculous works which formed the apostolic credentials ; we must continue to consider the claims as anti-christian in their character, and the uncharitableness which is associated with their assumption, as injurious rather to those by whom it is manifested, than to those towards whom it is directed. —We must consider the authority conferred by the Redeemer when he breathed on his disciples, and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” as strictly confined to the apostolic office ;—as untransmitted—as untransmissible by them to any other hands.

SECTION V.

NO PRIESTHOOD REFERRED TO IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPOINTMENT OF THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES.

We have had occasion repeatedly to refer to the Apostle Paul. He was not present when either of the commissions which we have been considering was given. He was then, either a stranger to Christianity, or opposed to it. He was, however, subsequently converted by a miraculous appearance of the Redeemer to him, qualified by direct revelation to enter on the apostolic office,—invested with its authority,—placed on an equality in the powers which were peculiar to the office with the other Apostles,—and he laboured in its discharge more abundantly than they all. If it were necessary to adduce his commission, or to refer more particularly to his writings, it would be seen, that they are as destitute of any allusion to the service of a priesthood, as discharged by men in the church on earth, as are those of the other Apostles.

He gives, indeed, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, what is in itself conclusive against the pretensions of the priesthood; a specific detail of the provision, which Christ, on his ascension to Heaven, had made for the

ministerial service of his church. “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”*

In this detail, we look in vain for a priest, or for any service to be performed for the body of Christ which priestly rites can accomplish. Uniformity of ritual observances, in which alone the boasted unity of the Roman-catholic church consists, is an essentially different thing from unity of faith, and knowledge of the Son of God. It may, and does, cover under its ample shade every diversity of human opinion, every form of ignorance, folly, and superstition; every gradation of scepticism, hypocrisy, and infidelity itself. It is a uniformity of bodily exercises which profit nothing, substituted for the life and power of godliness, which only is profitable for all things, and has the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.

A reference is however here more especially made to the Apostle Paul, for the purpose of introducing the subject of the keys. We nowhere read of the power of the keys being intrusted to any individual besides

* Ephes. iv. 11—13.

Peter. Though the power of binding and loosing, as we have seen, was afterwards given to the other Apostles, yet it remains recorded of Peter only, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven."* Yet, though the keys were intrusted to Peter alone, Paul tells the Corinthians, that he himself was not a "whit behind the very chiefest Apostles."† How is this declaration to be reconciled with Peter's exclusive possession of the power of the keys? The explanation appears easy.

Long before Paul wrote the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, if not, indeed, before he had entered on the discharge of his apostolic office, Peter had fully, and for ever, accomplished the purpose for which the keys were intrusted to him. He had opened the kingdom of heaven to the Jews on the Pentecostal morning, and afterwards to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. He had opened the kingdom to both the divisions of the great family of man, and no power of men or angels could close it again. He had unlocked, to both, the door of entrance to Christian privileges, and the keys could never be wanted again. He had opened wide the door of entrance to ministerial labour among both; and he, and his brethren in the apostolic office, entered as fellow-workers, with equal authority, to prosecute their divine employ. Supremacy, or infallibility in Peter, none of them ever rec-

* Matt. xvi. 19.

† 2 Cor. xi. 5.

ognized, and Paul, at Antioch, withstood him to the face ; and, so far from subsequently condemning himself for rashness, he deliberately declares, that Peter was to be blamed.

This fact takes out the key-stone of the papal system. Not only has his holiness of Rome no vestige of a document to prove the transmission of the keys from Peter's hands to his ;—not only is there no shadow of a reason for supposing that Peter ever intended, or ever possessed the power of transmitting the keys from his own to any other hand ;—but there is, in the declaration of Paul, which we have quoted, satisfactory proof, that Peter himself must have exhausted the power, and with it all apostolical pre-eminence, long before he had concluded his ministry. Having employed the keys for the purpose for which they were intrusted to him, neither his own, nor any other hand, need or could, use them any more.

If supremacy there was none in Peter, then no where else on earth can it be found ; and every pretension to it, whether made by pontiffs or sovereigns, is an usurpation of the prerogative of our Lord Jesus Christ. The bishops of Rome led the way, and set the example of intrusion into the *throne* of Christ, by declaring themselves, each one in his succession, to be the visible and ruling head of the church on earth : while the clergy intruded themselves into the *priestly office* of Christ, pretending to offer sacrifices, and give absolution for sin. The principles of human nature, out

of which this ecclesiastical usurpation sprung, and the concurring circumstances which would favour its growth, and enable it to advance to maturity, were not concealed from the prophetic eye of the Apostle Paul. He saw the principles already germinating in the church, in his own day, and was inspired exactly to foretel the mode in which their then obstructed vigour would unfold itself; and the means by which, at length, their matured production should be made to wither and die. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."* The indisputable records of history testify that the Romish usurpation did grow to the full gigantic height which is described in the prediction; but the spirit of that mouth which

* 2 Thess. ii. 3—8.

gave the Apostles their commission, has been blowing upon it, and it is consuming away.

The commencement of its decline connects itself with the exercise of a claim which we have not had occasion to notice ; but which, as it lays open one of the purposes for which the pretended power of the keys was employed, should not be altogether omitted. The claim to which we refer is that which is involved in the assumed authority to open the spiritual treasury, and to dispense to the members of the church, in the form of special indulgences, the stock of superfluous human merit, which is committed to the care and disposal of the successors of Saint Peter.

This stock of superfluous merit is produced, not by the efficacy of any official rites which have been discharged by the members of the hierarchy in their different gradations ; these can avail only at the time, and for the persons on whose account they have been respectively performed. The efficacy of official rites resembles the circulating cash, which answers all the daily and ordinary demands of the spiritual traffic. It was very desirable, however, that there should be, as the concerns of the superior merchants were so exceedingly extensive, a funded stock, which might be applied to on extraordinary occasions, and for extraordinary purposes. The fact perhaps was, that while the inferior orders of the hierarchy were content, as well they might be, with the profits of the retail trade, the superior were ambitious of becoming capitalists.

And (for in the plenitude of their power what could they not effect !) a capital was forthwith created ; and such a capital as no men ever enjoyed before, or ever will again. Relying on the acquiescence and approbation of all the dutiful and loving children of the church, whose virtues had exceeded the prescribed measure, and formed a surplus not needed by themselves ; they took it up, as unemployed capital, to be collected into a general fund, for the use of the mother by whom these children had been nourished. The fund, when it was created, was one of no ordinary value ; and by the continued contributions of numerous subscribers, who poured in the merit of their supererogatory prayers, and fastings, and almsgivings, and voluntary penances, and pilgrimages, and various self-denying labours, it soon grew so rapidly and enormously, that no arithmetical figures could express its amount, and consequently no tongue could adequately extol the riches of the church by which it was possessed. It was seen, at length, that there was no necessity that it should be reserved for careful and cautious application, only in extraordinary emergencies ; and it was deemed undesirable that it should remain as useless lumber in the treasury. Those who presided over the treasury began, therefore, now to entertain more extensive views, and to exercise more benevolent feelings. They saw that the sources of their supply could not fail, and they consequently resolved to make a liberal distribution. In pity to the

children of the church, dwelling in different parts of the world, whose virtues fell far below par, and whose purgatorial sufferings were on this account likely to be exceedingly protracted and severe, they kindly determined to apply the treasure which they superintended for their relief. Vessels were soon freighted with the most precious cargo which ever floated upon the waves, for the remoter regions of the earth, and for the isles of the sea ; while agents were commissioned to travel over-land, with full powers to draw upon the bank for any amount which they might find the people disposed to receive. It was, indeed, a most magnificent concern, worthy of the genius and splendour of the illustrious individual who then filled the pontifical throne ; and for a while it answered exceedingly well, to the mutual satisfaction, and reciprocal gratulation, both of those who dispensed, and those who received. It is true, there was occasionally a muttering of low and selfish complaint from some of those who conducted the retail trade, which was not a little injured by the wholesale dealings of the capitalists ; but this, as might have been expected, was not much regarded by those, who felt themselves secure in the possession of the stock and the market. It happened, however, unfortunately for the concern, that one of their agents, who travelled to Germany, mismanaged their business, and gave offence to a monk, whose eye (naturally too clear for the region in which he dwelt) was beginning to look beyond his

cell; and who, having been once provoked to come forth, and throw off his cowl, could never be persuaded to go back and put it on again. He felt the spirit of the adage, "all is not gold that glitters," and resolved to sift the pretensions and constitution of the firm to the bottom. The result is well known: he published it to the world. He cleared away the illusions which the parties engaged in the concern had artfully thrown around their transactions,—proved their capital to be fictitious,—and gave a shock to their credit, from which it has never recovered, and which is rapidly waning to its extinction. The day is not far distant, when every eye will see that it was a speculation,—when every lip will pronounce it to have been—a bubble.

The notion that one class of men can perform works of supererogation, the merit of which can be transferred, by those who have assumed power in the church, to another class of their fellow-men, is so monstrous and absurd, that, to meet it with serious argument is unnecessary and impossible. The sacred writers knew of no men who possessed works of righteousness sufficient to justify themselves before God; much less were they acquainted with any who had a superfluous store, from which to contribute towards the justification of others. The works which are so highly extolled as meritorious in the Romish Church, if they are works which God has commanded, even though they should have been performed without the

slightest imperfection in their motive or their execution, must be followed with the confession, "We are unprofitable servants, we have done nothing more than it was our duty to perform." If they have not been commanded by God, they will be met by the mortifying question of frowning disapprobation, "Who hath required this at your hands?" Any church which pretends to possess a stock of spiritual wealth, should consider well what is meant in the address to the Laodiceans; "Thou sayest that I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

The credit of indulgences has failed. The power and glory of the pontificate have departed. The strength and influence which remain connected with the Roman-catholic system, exist principally in the order of the priesthood, and the imposing rites which by that order are discharged. The foundations of that order have not yet been sufficiently investigated, and laid open to the public eye. When examined, this appears to be the weakest part of the whole system; and when successfully assailed, leaves every other part of the structure unsupported to fall in ruins. Let the fact be established, that the Christian ministry is not a priesthood; that there is no priest appointed to officiate in the church on earth; and then, the spell which bound together the magnificent edifice in which the antichristian power was enthroned is dissolved,

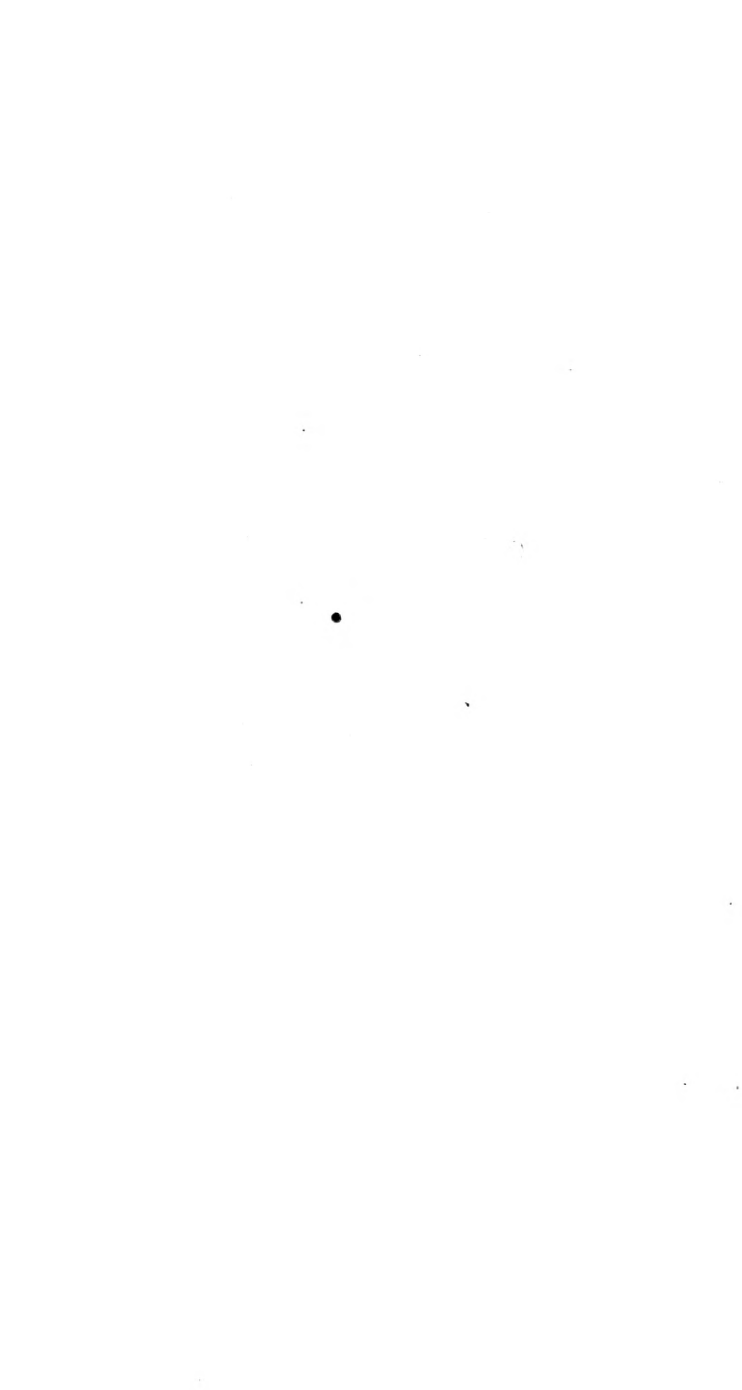
and not one stone is left upon another which is not thrown down. In proof of this fact, we have already adduced—the impossibility of resting the authority of an earthly Christian priesthood, on a basis corresponding with the firmness of that, on which the Jewish priesthood rested; while the augmented extent and height of the superstructure require, that its basis should be proportionably stronger:—the absence of Levitical terms from the designations which are applied to the Christian ministry by the writers of the New Testament; while on every other subject they employ them profusely, and on this, had they been appropriate, they might have been expected to have used them in great abundance:—the impossibility of finding the remotest allusion to the office and rites of a priesthood, in the sending forth of the twelve, or the seventy, or in the more extended commission, which was given to the Apostles at the mountain in Galilee. We have shown, that baptism and the Lord's supper, the only ritual observances which are enjoined in the New Testament, together with their corresponding rites in the Jewish church, circumcision, and the pass-over, were never by divine appointment connected with the office of a priesthood;—that the power committed to the Apostles of remitting or retaining sins cannot be identified with the practice of absolution;—that absolution, though where it is performed it is limited to those who are in priest's orders, was no part of the work of the Jewish priesthood;—that the power

which was committed to the Apostles, was exemplified in their binding or loosing supernatural diseases, with the consequent demonstration of the imputation or removal of guilt, in the case of those who were the subjects of ecclesiastical discipline ; a power necessary only to themselves in the first organization of the Christian church, and not transmissible from them to any order of ministers which, when they died, they left behind them. And, we have referred to the unwarranted assumptions which are made in conferring the orders of the priesthood ; assumptions, which, however they may accord with the antichristian pretensions of the man of sin, who claims, as the successor of St. Peter, to be intrusted with the keys, are injurious to the character of a Protestant church, and most uncharitably asperse the ministerial work of the thousands who labour in other Protestant communions, with the evident sanction and blessing of their one Master and Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The argument of this portion of our work, that the Christian ministry is not a priesthood, while thus far satisfactory and conclusive, will yet, we trust, be seen in clearer light and accumulated strength, by the reflex bearing upon it of the priesthood of Christ ; and the application of the Levitical terms not relating to him, which the New Testament contains ;—the parts of our subject which remain to be discussed.

THE BOOK OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

PART II.



PART II.

CHRIST THE ONLY, BUT ALL-SUFFICIENT PRIEST OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

SECTION I.

CHRIST THE ONLY PRIEST.

“AND they truly”—the high priests of the Jewish church,—“were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.”* As their mortality rendered necessary a succession of individuals in the same office of high priest, so the limited nature of their powers, rendered necessary the association of others with them, to discharge the more ordinary, multifarious, and subordinate duties of the priesthood. Aaron and *his sons*, therefore, were consecrated to serve at the altar, and in their services their multiplying descendants were to succeed them.

And yet, it is worthy of remark, that numerous and imposing though the ceremonies were which the Jewish priesthood was appointed to perform; it was in

Heb. vii. 23.

itself, when compared with any modern hierarchy, a very simple and inartificial structure. Accustomed as we are to take it for granted, that more recent pretensions assuming to be formed upon the Jewish model, must accord with their archetype, though they may not harmonize with Christianity; we associate with the original, the ideas which we receive while beholding the imitation, and our conceptions of the Jewish hierarchy are consequently very incorrect and exaggerated. The splendour which, when it existed, it presented to the eye of the worshipper, and by which, since its removal, it impresses the minds of those who are acquainted with the descriptions of its services, was derived from the concentration of those services in one temple; and that temple, besides the costliness of its materials, and the vastness of its extent, hallowed by the enshrined glory of the present Deity. If we examine the construction of the hierarchy, we shall find, that there was in it no long and graduated scale of offices, titles, powers, privileges, and emoluments; no incentive to earthly feeling in the prospect of rising from dignity to dignity, and benefice to benefice; no inducement to desecrate the character by employing unworthy subserviency and intrigue as the means of advancement. With the solitary exception of him who stood next in succession to the high priest, ecclesiastical advancement was unknown. On the death of one high-priest, the individual next in succession rose at once into the

vacant office ; and entered on it, not to exercise authority over his subordinate brethren, but to discharge duties for the people, with which it was not lawful for them to intermeddle. The rest were alike in their title, their vestments, the rites which they were allowed to discharge, and the emoluments which they received.* In the station which they occupied on the

* If, at a period long subsequent to the establishment of the priesthood, when its members were divided into courses by David, any difference was made between the subordinate priests, it was simply because some stood nearer to the parent stock than others. “ Among the sons of Eleazar, there were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers, and eight among the sons of Ithamar, according to the house of their fathers.” Here, observe, these twenty-four had no superior sacerdotal title to distinguish them from others—they were chief *men* not chief priests. They were chief, not in the *office* of their fathers—there, with one exception, all were equal—but in the *house* of their fathers ; there, age, as was the case among the Israelites generally, gave them pre-eminence, as heads of families. And when they were appointed by David to superintend the services of the families to which they respectively belonged ; to prevent the springing up of any bitter root of ambition or jealousy among them, they took the order of their courses by lot ; and the individual members of each course, during the period of its service, took in the same way their appointment to the work, which in the temple they were to perform.

day of their consecration, they continued till the last day of their services, having neither poverty nor riches, neither scope for ambition, nor mortification from want of success.

In this arrangement, we see a developement of the wisdom of God, in keeping the temptations, which disquiet and corrupt the secular ranks of society, away from the eye, and the hand, of those who ministered before him in his sanctuary: and the contrast, in this particular, between the Jewish and more recent hierarchies, clearly demonstrates the hand of their respective builders. In the latter, there have been blended with human contrivances, too much of the subtlety of the serpent, in presenting the gilded fruit to the eye, and entangling the conscience in the web of equivocal declarations, or vows made only to be broken. So obviously did the Romish hierarchy, in the pe-

“To avoid all confusion, now that they were much increased, David distributed the priests, as he had done the Levites, into several courses; which no doubt was by a divine direction, as well as the other. He appointed sixteen courses of the sons of Eleazar, under as many *heads of their families*; and half as many of the sons of Ithamar.”—BISHOP PATRICK.

As the Levites were not, and never could become, *ιερείς*, (priests,) they cannot be included in the *hierarchy*, with any more propriety than can the servitors and choristers, who attend the present cathedral service.

riod of its power and secular glory, work the moral debasement of its own members, that scarcely a century of its history was accustomed to pass, without the rise of some new religious fraternity, the necessity for which was advocated, on the ground of the corruption of the orders that previously existed: and the members of which vowed for themselves extreme and perpetual mortification and poverty. The vows were broken as constantly as they were made, for the spirit of ambition and rapacity was inherent in the system: working through all its gradations, from the cell of the monk up to the throne of the pontiff.

But, simple and inartificial though the Jewish hierarchy was, when compared with those which men have subsequently framed; not only was it never intended to be the model, after which should be formed the ministry of the Christian church, it was not even the most perfect type which had been exhibited, of the priesthood of Christ himself. In the prime and glory therefore of the Jewish priesthood, when it was exercised under the auspices of the most popular of the kings—the king who loved the sanctuary better than the throne; under the reign of David, and by the lips of David, a prediction was given, which not only involved the change and abolition of the priesthood then existing, but also assigned the pre-eminence in typical importance to another order, by which it had been preceded. Looking with prophetic eye to the Messiah, and addressing him with the fervent tongue of inspira-

tion, he says, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent; Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec."*

By what, then, was the order of Melchisedec distinguished from that of Aaron? Principally by its individual and exclusive character. As a priest, he was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life."† The meaning of this apostolic description of the priesthood of Melchisedec appears to be, that he derived his office from no ancestors, and entailed it on no descendant; that of its commencement or termination no record is given, but a mysterious silence and secrecy preserved; in order, that as no boundaries can be put to its duration, it might more completely typify the priesthood with him, who continueth in his office for ever. It stands alone, prominent in the long vista of receding ages, unequalled, unrivalled, in sublime and solitary grandeur. Abraham, though Levi the progenitor of Aaron was in his loins; though he was a priest himself, and to this title added conqueror, and was returning from battle with the spoils of the kings; though his name gave honour and privilege to his descendants the Jews; though he was the father of the faithful and the friend of God; yet, Abraham himself acknowledged superiority in the character and office of Melchisedec, presented to him the tenth of his spoils, and reverently

* Psalm cx. 4.

† Heb. vii. 3.

received the blessing from his lips. Here then we have the divinely appointed type of the priesthood of the Christian church ; it pre-figures but one person for all the ages of that church, and that person standing alone, unassociated with others in his office. That person is Christ. He is made an High Priest for ever, not after the order of Aaron, in which subordinates were associated for the discharge of its inferior and ordinary services ; but after the order of Melchisedec, who, in the honours and functions of his office, remains unchanging, *exclusive*, and supreme.

If, however, the prediction that another priest should arise after the order of Melchisedec, and who should not be called after the order of Aaron, implied the imperfection and ultimate removal of the Levitical priesthood ; it was necessary, that the superior claims of him who came to fulfil the prediction, and to disannul the authority of a priesthood, which for fifteen centuries had been officiating by Divine appointment, should be clearly and powerfully authenticated. Thus were authenticated the claims of him, who was once known as Jesus of Nazareth, but who now sustains the combined offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, in the Christian church. His inauguration took place in the presence of the multitude, which thronged to the baptism that John administered on the banks of the Jordan. Instead of an earthly hand, to which authority had been delegated, pouring the precious unction, diffusive in its fragrance, upon his head ; the Holy Spirit de-

scended in a visible form, to overshadow and rest upon him like a dove ; while the voice of the Father bore witness to him, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* The testimony was repeated when, on the mount of transfiguration, Moses, by whom the law had been given, and the Levitical priesthood consecrated for the performance of its rites,—and Elijah, who above all others had laboured to bring his apostate countrymen back to its observance, were seen with him, and heard conversing about the vicarious and expiatory death which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. And again was the testimony repeated, when, the Saviour’s hour being come, he spake to the Greeks who had desired an interview with him, of his own sufferings, and the glory that should follow. That in the character in which John directed public attention to him, his innocent blood was shed, the Apostles testified with their living voice to the world, and the Evangelists in their Gospels bear continued and undying record. The acceptance of the sacrifice was demonstrated, in the resurrection of the body which had been the victim from the tomb ; and the complacence of the Father in the work, which, as the High Priest of our profession, he entered into the celestial temple to discharge, was made known, in the abundant effusion of spiritual blessings, which followed his ascension in our nature into heaven.

* Matt. iii. 17.

But, it is by the Apostle Paul, that the priesthood of Christ is most clearly and fully unfolded to our view. His Epistle to the Hebrews is the true Levitical book of the New Testament. In it we are to look for the functions of the priesthood of the Christian church, as in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus, where he speaks nothing concerning priesthood, we are to look for the functions of the Christian ministry. Let the distinction be made between THE PRIEST who officiates for the church, and the ministry which is appointed to proclaim his excellencies, to direct the guilty to him, and to instruct the church, that its members may grow in the knowledge of him, and then will the subject open easily before us, and present a merciful and complete provision for every part of our case, as sinners before God.

In accordance with the facts of the Saviour's history to which we have referred, is the account which the Apostle gives in the New Testament Leviticus of his appointment to the priestly office. We have seen, that no delegated authority was employed in the investiture; —that by the Holy Ghost he was anointed, and by the voice of the living God, in the official character which he now publicly assumed, declared to be his Son, in whose person and work he was well pleased. So the Apostle Paul refers to the appointment which preceded the public investiture, as a solemn transaction between the Father and the Son, on his assuming the human nature in which the office was to be dis-

charged ; and becoming subject to those infirmities, the recital of which enables us more clearly to apprehend him as a merciful and faithful High Priest for us in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for our sins, and succour us in our temptations. “For every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins : who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way ; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. *And no man taketh this honour upon himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron : so also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest ; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.* As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared ; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered ; and being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him ; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.”*

Connect the reiterated declaration of the order of

* Heb. v. 1—10.

Christ's priesthood, which we have shown to be individual and exclusive, with the fact, that neither in the Hebrews nor in any other book of the New Testament, is there a reference to any other priest as officiating for the Christian church; and with the statements contained in this passage, that no man taketh the honour of the priesthood upon himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron,—that not even Christ glorified *himself* to be made an high priest; and we have all which we can need in proof of the first part of the argument of this chapter, that HE is the *only* priest who is authorized to officiate for the church of which he is the Head.

How lamentably do those mistake the design, and pervert the application of the statement, that “no man taketh the honour upon himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron,” who quote it for the uncharitable purpose of nullifying the ministerial functions of all, who have not, like themselves, received priest's orders. Bigotry is defective in its organs of vision, and therefore often stumbles most unhappily, where the light, too strong for its eye, shines with most clearness. There is no passage in the Scriptures which more decisively overthrows all the pretensions which men make to the office of the priesthood, than does this, which is most commonly quoted for their support and confirmation. It will fully sustain an assertion, even stronger, and more comprehensive than any which we have yet ventured to make;—that there is no priest,

officiating for men by divine appointment, in the universe of God, besides Christ ; *because, none but he can clearly show, like Aaron and his descendants, a call from God to the office of the priesthood.* We may, with this inspired declaration in our hand, go round the world, and demonstrate the fallacy of every pretension to the honour of the priesthood, by whomsoever made ; and end in the conclusion, that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved, than that of the man Christ Jesus ; because he only officiates, by divine appointment, as priest and mediator between God and man.

It will not for a moment be pretended, that the priests of any of the idolatrous systems which yet exist in the earth, can show that they have a call from God corresponding with that of Aaron. They disclaim the authority of the living God by whom Aaron was called ; but they disclaim it in vain, for they are destined, with the systems which they uphold, to fall before it. The light, which chased from the earth the delusions which were found in the various systems of classic idolatry, is spreading amongst them. The rod of the Redeemer's strength, which, when it was first sent forth from Sion, broke the spell of the strongest enchantments under which the mind of man had ever been held, is already carried to the threshold, or has entered the interior of every idolatrous structure which is found upon the globe. Feeble, despised, and reproached, may be the hands which bear it ; but its work is deter-

mined by him, who hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and its execution is certain. It will again, as in classic regions of old, leave to posterity nothing but the remembrance and the name of the systems, the deities, and the priests, against which its stroke is directed.

Of Jewish priests, besides that the order is disannulled, none, who can prove their descent from Aaron, are to be found. The genealogical tables are irrecoverably lost, if the race of Aaron itself is not altogether extinct. Could a descendant of Aaron be produced, there is no temple in which he could officiate, no altar at which he could serve. The city, in which only the daily rites or annual solemnities of his religion can be lawfully observed, is desecrated, and trodden under foot of the gentiles. The mosque of Omar, reared for the disciples of the false prophet, stands upon the very spot on which David placed the ark, and Solomon, subsequently reared the temple; and it is death to a Jew to pass over its threshold.* No

* "When the Romans took Jerusalem, Titus ordered his soldiers to dig up the foundations both of the city and the temple: and Terentius Rufus, the Roman general, is stated to have driven a ploughshare over the site of the sacred edifice. When the caliph Omar took Jerusalem, the spot had been abandoned by the Christians. Seid Eben Batrik, an Arabian historian, relates, that the caliph applied to the patriarch Sophronius, and inquired of him

vestige of any priesthood, which could boast its original appointment to be from God, remains, to rival the office, or obstruct the work, which belongs exclusively to Christ. The people, (his own people,) who rejected him when he came to them, have nothing left, which they can substitute in his stead. They are without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an *ephod*, (that part of the priest's dress which distinguished him from all other men, and is therefore here employed to designate his office,) and without teraphim. The vital and essential principles of the Jewish religion,—that religion which poured such copious streams of light and joy into the breast of David, and of those who, with accordant hearts and voices, responded to the symphonies, or united in the chorus of his psalms,—are transfused into the Christian system, are embodied in the person and work of him who is our atoning sacri-

what would be the most proper place at Jerusalem for building a mosque. Sophronius conducted him to the ruins of Solomon's temple. The caliph Abd-el-Malek made additions to the buildings, and enclosed the rock with walls. His successor, the caliph El-Oulid, contributed still more to the embellishment of El-Sakhara, and covered it with a dome of copper, gilt, taken from a church at Balbec. The crusaders converted this temple of Mahommed into a Christian sanctuary, but Saladin restored it to its original use."—*Modern Traveller*, vol. i. p. 93.

fice and interceding priest. The light of Judaism, increased to sevenfold brightness, spreads its radiance over the Christian church, and diffuses peace and joy, through believing, in the heart of every humble disciple of Christ: while the Jew, with nothing but the name, and the painful initiatory rite of his own religion, sits mourning in darkness and despondency,—an exile from the land, and a rebellious wanderer, disowned by the God of his fathers. Bright and joyful for himself, and for the world, will be the day when he shall look, with a believing eye, on Him whom he has pierced; obtain peace with his offended God by the blood of the cross; be raised from his moral and political debasement; and be incorporated with the Christian fold in the aggregation of its numbers, the perfection of its light, the fulness of its privileges, and the entireness of its dependence on the great High Priest of our profession, the only mediator between God and man.

The priests of the Roman-catholic church may preserve a dignified silence, when asked by an heretical inquirer to show the call of their order to be like that of Aaron; or, if they condescend to reply, may expatiate most profoundly and mysteriously on the power derived from Peter, the authority of the fathers, the traditions of the church; and endeavour to escape the point of the question, by surrounding themselves with a wilderness of words; but this will avail only with those whose minds are entirely surrendered to their

guidance, and who venture to think upon religious subjects only as they dictate. Every individual, in whose breast the spark of freedom is not extinguished, we would remind,—that Peter was no priest himself, and had no command, like Moses, to confer the order upon others;—that the fathers derived no priesthood from the Apostles, and cannot authorize its assumption by others or by themselves;—that tradition was the delusive cover of the enormous corruptions which the Redeemer, in his personal ministry, exposed, and the resource of the degenerate priests, who conspired with the elders to put him to death;—but that Aaron's call was written, as is that of Christ, explicitly, and fully, in the uncorrupted word, which liveth and abideth for ever. No priesthood can sustain its pretensions to an appointment from God, which cannot, like that of Aaron, show us its institution, its designation, its prescribed mode of perpetuation, its specific arrangements for the ritual of its services, on the same authoritative and imperishable pages. With whomsoever the Romish priesthood originated, there was no call from God. It was honour which men took upon themselves. Its titles and claims are founded in a series of usurpations, which, however excellent and even exemplary may be many of those who succeed to them, and had no share in the original encroachment, could be entailed with no better right than is found in the transmission of the self-assumed titles and ill-gotten booty of a lawless banditti. Long established posses-

sion may, indeed, give legal sanction to secular claims which originated in usurpation ; but this cannot be the case with ecclesiastical and spiritual claims ; because He ever lives whose prerogative has been invaded ; and his laws and institutions remain imperative on the conscience, in their primitive and uncorrupted simplicity.*

If the Roman-catholic priesthood cannot show a call to the office, like that which could have been presented by the descendants of Aaron, of course, any Prot-

* Those who require any thing more than tradition to substantiate the authority of a priesthood, will consider the following paragraph of father Calmet's to be a concession of the whole question. It assumes, indeed, the appointment of "priests of the new law ;" but admits, what destroys the assumption, that they have no call like that of Aaron.

"We have enlarged on the rights, prerogatives, functions, and revenues of the priests of the old law, under the foregoing article. We cannot do the same in respect to the priests of the new law, because neither Christ in the Gospels, nor his Apostles in any of their writings, have ordained the ceremonies to be used in the consecration of priests, or elders, in the administration of the sacraments, nor all the circumstances which may accompany those rites. The Apostles left some things to the wisdom and discretion of the church, though they taught them to the faithful of their own times *viva voce*."—*Calmet's Dictionary*, Art. PRIEST.

estants who derive their title and orders through the channel of the older church, must be equally deficient in the means of substantiating their claim. Some of the wisest apologists of the English Episcopal church, indeed, relinquish the claim, and admit the title to be improper.* It is devoutly to be wished, that the title,

* “Although, in truth, the word *presbyter* doth seem more fit, and in propriety of speech more agreeable, than *priest*, with the drift of the whole gospel of Jesus Christ.” —HOOKER.

In the Book of Common Prayer, which was put forth by royal authority, for Scotland, when the effort was made to force episcopacy upon her, I believe the title priest was omitted, and presbyter substituted in its place. If the word priest is, as some tell us, a *corruption* of the word presbyter; why (unless the church has some unavoidable affinity with corruption) cannot the pure and primitive term be employed in the English service-book also; instead of one, whose equivocal import misleads, not merely the people, but some of the first authorities among the clergy? How, on the hypothesis referred to, are we to construe the following passage? “Who are the best friends every minister hath in his parish? They who attend the prayers and sacraments with him; who are edified by his *priesthood* as well as by his *preaching*.”—*Jones’ Essay on the Church*.

In the following note from the pen of another approved writer, subsequently elevated to the bench, the American episcopalians, who it would appear have ventured to alter

with every remaining vestage of the claims which have been associated with it, were removed from every Protestant communion ; and that the whole were able, with unfettered hands, and undivided hearts, to assail this remaining citadel of anti-christian delusion, into which, with scarcely any molestation, it has retired. Were the weakness of its foundations honestly laid

the Liturgy which they received from the parent church, are gravely, and seriously blamed, for having relinquished that which involved the essence of the *sacerdotal* claim.

“ It deserves to be noticed, that in the American liturgy this form ” (the form of absolution) “ is omitted in the service of the Visitation of the Sick, and no direction is given for particular confession or absolution. In the form for the Visitation of Prisoners, is a direction to the minister to exhort the criminal to a particular confession for the sins for which he is condemned : after which, the minister is to *declare* to him the pardoning mercy of God, in the form which is in the Communion Service, which is the same as that in our Communion Service, and which is in supplicating form. Notwithstanding, therefore, the compilers of this liturgy profess that their church is far from intending to depart from the Church of England, in any essential point of discipline or worship ; they seem to have designed to relinquish particular confession of sins, and the authoritative power of absolution in the priesthood—its essential and important claim, and without which the *sacerdotal* commission is destitute of sanctions.”—*Sermons at the Bampton Lecture, by Dr. Gray.*

open to the public eye, by those who have the power to arrest and direct its attention; were the simple but effectual and demonstrative proposition, No official priest but Christ, to be substituted for the unworthy and unapostolic cry, "The Church is in danger," by those who can control and direct the public voice; we might then expect, that the adversaries of scriptural truth would tremble,—that the bulwarks of superstition, like the walls of Jericho, before the shouts of the Israelites, would fall to the ground,—and that the voice of the apocalyptic angel would break next upon the ear, proclaiming, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen;" "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy Apostles and Prophets, for God hath avenged you on her."

By the holy Prophets, no priest is predicted for the service of the Christian church, but Christ. By the holy Apostles, no priest is described as officiating by divine appointment, but Christ. He only is called of God to the office, as was Aaron; but he, superior to Aaron, is appointed with the solemnity of an oath, is appointed exclusively and irrevocably, for all generations. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Those who introduce another priest, invade God's prerogative, to whom alone the right of appointment belongs; detract from the Saviour's perfections, as though he were not every way competent to the work, which the Father has committed exclusively to him

and betray the interests of the souls of their fellow men, who, in so far as they trust to the work of the intruding priesthood, are withdrawn from reliance on him, to whom only we are commanded to look, and who only has power to save. In too many instances, there is reason to fear, the withdrawment has been entire, and the consequent injury irreparable. How often, in the hour of dissolution, has the mind been occupied, the conscience soothed, and the hope inspired, not by what Christ, but by what the priest, has performed. He has heard the confession, has pronounced the absolution, has given the host, has administered the unction, and therefore all is safe. Fatal delusion ! produced by rites, which possess no more authority or efficacy than are to be found in the cabalistic talisman, or the water of the Ganges.

And not unfrequently among Protestants, the bread and wine of the Lord's supper are prostituted to a similar purpose of delusion and injury. They are carried to the chamber of the dying, not because there is any command or precedent in the Scriptures, for celebrating the supper under such circumstances ; but, because the popish error still lingers, under a modified form, in the Protestant church,—that there is virtue in the elements, when they have been officially administered, to make our peace with God, and afford a passport to his kingdom. A faithful and enlightened minister may, indeed, by the exercise of the discretionary power which he is understood to possess, in reference to the individ-

ual administration of the supper, correct the evil which an unscriptural system involves, in most of the cases which come under his own personal care ; but then the working of the system, when, as is too commonly the case, it is intrusted to an individual who is qualified for the cure of souls, only by his being invested for his own secular advantage with the orders of the priest, is lamentable in the extreme. In every case, whether it be that of Catholic or Protestant, in which the conscience derives its peace from the discharge of official rites which are performed by men, there is something brought between the soul and God, as the ground of hope, which he has not authorised, and which, so far as it is relied upon, deceives and betrays, instead of securing the recipient. The ministers of the Christian religion are to stand amongst their fellow men, not like the priests in the temple, discharging rites through which there was access to God, and the enjoyment of his favour ; but like John, on the banks of the Jordan, concerned that Christ only may be seen, relied on, and followed, and pointing to him as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ; or like Moses, when he had raised the brazen serpent upon the pole, directing the languishing and closing eye to the only remedy which God had appointed : “ For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so has the Son of man been lifted up ; that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”

If, as we hope we have sufficiently proved, Christ is the *only* Priest officiating by divine appointment for the Christian church, we might, on this fact alone, rest the argument of the second head of our general proposition under this part of the subject,—that he is also the *all-sufficient* Priest. The argument here might be comprised in few words. God, in the infinity of his knowledge, is perfectly acquainted with the whole wants of the whole church. In the infinity of his resources, he is able fully to provide for the whole wants of the whole church. If he make any provision at all, regard to the honour of his character requires, that it should be perfect and complete. He has provided the church a priest, in the person of his Son. He has appointed no other to the office ; and the inference is undeniable, that the church can want no other. The perfection and completeness of Christ's work as a priest, must not however be summarily dismissed. It requires, and will amply reward, extended discussion, and full consideration. While we shall find in it abundant confirmation of the principles which have been already advocated, we shall find also the solid rock on which to build our hope, when every other foundation has proved on examination treacherous, and has given way beneath us.

SECTION II.

CHRIST THE ALL-SUFFICIENT PRIEST—THE PERFECTION OF HIS SACRIFICE.

“AND almost all things are by the law purged with blood ; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these ; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us ; nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others ; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world ; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment : so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”*

* Heb. ix. 22—28.

The second clause of this beautiful and impressive passage contains, in the form of a simple axiom, the leading principle of divine revelation. It is the key which opens, and the clue which conducts through every chamber of the treasury of truth. Those who decline its use stumble at the threshold, and grope in vain to find an entrance. The institution of sacrifices,—the consecration of the priest,—the inspiration of the prophet,—the incarnation of the Redeemer,—the mission of the Apostles,—the work of the ministry of reconciliation, from its establishment till time shall end,—all derive their meaning and importance from the fact, “that without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

It is to the work of the priest that our attention must be confined. When the father of every family was a priest, the altar was the place where he conducted the worship; and he could come with his household acceptably to God; only as he brought, like Abel, an animal sacrifice, a living victim, whose blood might be shed before it was presented upon the altar. When the Jewish dispensation was instituted, besides the particular offerings which were appointed for defined cases of transgression, and the numerous victims for the several extraordinary annual solemnities, twice every day the priests, on behalf of the people, were to shed the blood of a lamb, and to present its entire body on the altar, that it might be consumed in the fire which God had enkindled, and which the priests

were carefully to preserve from being extinguished. Connected with this rite, and dependent on its observance, was the promise, that God would dwell among the children of Israel, and be their God:—

“Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: and with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil: and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering. And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest’s office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.”*

The time of presenting the continual burnt offering, on the appointment of which this gracious promise

* Exod. xxix. 38—45.

was made, and on the observance of which its fulfilment depended, was at nine in the morning and at three in the afternoon. When the people rested in their encampments in the wilderness, they would at these hours of each returning day, have an opportunity of appearing before God at the door of the tabernacle, to perform the worship which was required, and enjoy the manifestation of divine favour which was promised. The tabernacle was pitched in the midst of the encampment, an open space for the reception of the people was left around it, and twice every day would there be a general movement towards it, from the tents of those who valued and desired to observe the institutions of God's appointment. The object, to which on each occasion every eye would be turned, was an innocent lamb, struggling under the hand of the priest, while the sacrificial knife was plunged into its veins, and the blood which was its life was poured out upon the ground. When, however, the people took possession of their respective inheritances in the land of promise, it was impossible that they should assemble daily before the Lord, at the place which he might choose for the tabernacle to be fixed; and the commandment to appear was then restricted to three times a year, at the great annual festivals. Still, the continual burnt offering was to be presented on behalf of the whole of the people as before; and the time of its presentation, morning and evening, was the hour of prayer throughout all the land. Those who dwelt too

far from the sanctuary to allow of their going to it, yet turned their faces towards it ; and by virtue of the rites which were there performing, presented acceptably their supplications to God.

And be it remembered, that we possess other powers of vision beside the eye. The imagination can embody, and vividly present scenes which we know to be taking place beyond the ken of the eye ; scenes, which we know have taken place ages before we came into existence ; scenes, which we know will be unfolded in ages which are yet to come. And the workings of the imagination, when it is excited and impressed, not by the figments of human invention, but by the specific institutions, the simple narrations, the unerring testimony of the word of God, rise into the principle of faith, the operative principle in the life of the saints under every dispensation of religion which God has established in the world. Things, which are invisible to sense, are realized by the mind ; their influence is felt ; they are applied to for consolation ; the actions are regulated by them with the same decision and force as though they stood out in material forms before the eye, and spoke with audible voices to the ear. The most simple and unlettered Christian, who has implored the promised influences of the Spirit of God, understands and feels this ; and needs no corporeal representations to bring his mind into contact with the cross of Christ, and the cleansing, tranquillizing, joy-infusing efficacy of his atoning blood. The man who

has not this principle of faith, may have his feelings wrought upon by well-contrived scenic exhibitions or by powerful local associations ; but, in his highest state of excitement, he will be as far from the enjoyment of peace with God, of fellowship with him, and of conformity to his image, as he was before. He may, as did many of the crusaders, weep floods of religious tears on one day, and burn with deadly rage, or indulge in gross licentiousness, on the next. The religion which ministers only, or principally, to the senses, will often feed the fires which corrupt nature has enkindled in the breast, and by the frequent and specious demand for the exercise of the passions, give intensity to their strength, and confirm them in a dominion more powerful and despotic than they would otherwise have possessed. Such a religion, wherever it has been found, has come not from above, but from beneath. God's institutions have ever presented enough that was material to lay hold on the inferior part of our nature,—to show, that the body and its senses, as well as the soul and its nobler faculties, are his, and were made for his service ; but then, what has been material in his institutions has been constructed, like the ladder which Jacob saw, to facilitate our ascent to a region which is ethereal, to associate us with attendants which are spiritual, to bring us into the secret place of his own presence, that we may converse with him as the Father of our spirits, and dwell under the shadow of his wings.

The skill and subtlety of Satan have been displayed, in placing his corruptions on the basis of God's institutions, to obstruct the soul in its ascent, to engross it with inferior objects, and at length to drag it, fettered and debased, to grovel again upon the earth. The Patriarch had only, by divine appointment, his altar, and his victim. Of sights or sounds, none other which were artificial ministered to his devotion. Around him were God's works, not man's: the light of the day, emblematic of the simple purity and lustre of the worship which he presented, not the dim religious gloom in which the soul is subdued by superstitious power. But from this simple patriarchal stock, what multiform, wide-spreading, and durable systems of idolatrous worship, have, by engrafting, been produced! The altar, and the victim, show the root from which they have grown; but with what fruits of bitterness, impurity, and cruelty, have the branches of the unnatural scions ever abounded! The Jew, when he went at the festivals to the place of general assembly, witnessed rites more numerous, and ceremonies more imposing, than had ever been presented at the more domestic scenes of patriarchal worship; but, in his ordinary and daily services, he was thrown more entirely upon the resources of the mind, than was the patriarch himself. He could not place an altar near his dwelling, nor select from his flock a victim for sacrifice whenever he chose; but if he were an Israelite indeed, he could, and did, draw near in spirit

unto God, in the daily and solitary exercises of his devotion when he was absent from the temple, as well as when he was present with the multitude, where the lamb was led to the slaughter, and its blood of typical atonement was shed.

Nor did the worship which was presented in the temple, correspond in the means by which it was rendered impressive, with that which is produced by artificial excitements amid the sombre shades of the gloomy gothic pile. At its services, the people in their worship, and the priests in those of their ministrations which were visible to the people, had over them, the blue canopy of heaven ; and around them, the unobstructed light of the day. The capacious altar, with its inextinguished fire, and numerous whole burnt offerings, could not, like the altars which are reared for the presentation of an unbloody sacrifice, be covered with vaulted roofs, adorned with curious workmanship. The courts, in which the many thousands of Israel could assemble, were too extensive to admit a covering ; too densely crowded at the festivals, to have rendered any confinement of the atmosphere consistent with the safety of the worshippers. The hour of daily service in the morning, was when the sun had advanced half-way to its meridian ; and in the evening, when it had descended but half-way to the gates of the west. The festivals, excepting that of the Passover, which was not celebrated in the temple, were holden in the day. Its worshippers " were

children of the light, and of the day, not of the night, and of darkness.”

And here, trusting that the reader will excuse the short digression which we are indulging, we may observe, how the argument for the use of the altar, and the host, and the crucifix, and the images, and the pictures, and the relics, and all the paraphernalia of Roman-catholic worship, falls through, and breaks to pieces, even when compared with the use of what was corporeal in Judaism itself. So far was it from being necessary that the people should have material excitements to sustain their daily devotion, that they were strictly forbidden to offer a sacrifice, at any other place than that at which the sanctuary was fixed, and to which the great mass of the people could go only three times a year. With the same strictness were they forbidden to make any graven image, any likeness of any thing that was in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, which might be bowed down to or worshipped; so that representations of the lamb, or the altar, or the priest, we may be sure they had none. Nor was a Jew allowed to disturb the sepulchres of the dead for the purpose of obtaining the relics of a saint; though it was well known where Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph lay; and the latter was, according to the manner of the Egyptians, embalmed. A Jew would have felt himself defiled by touching the dead body of Abraham himself. Above all, would the sanctuary of the

living God have been desecrated by depositing any portion of a dead body in it. No lustration could have removed the pollution, till every particle of the offensive dust had been cleared away. It remained for the delicate perceptions of the sublime and angelical doctors of the Christian church, to discover how much odour of sanctity could be enclosed in a coffin; for their pure and sacred hands to open the precious perfume, and exhibit to the adoring multitude the inestimable fragments of shrivelled members and decaying bones; for their penetrating genius to make manifest how much the souls and the *bodies* of the living, might be benefitted by approaching the mouldering ashes of the dead; for their clear and syllogistic reasoning to demonstrate, how one and the same fragment of a saint could exist, and perform its miraculous functions, in distant places, and at one period of time; for their generous disinterestedness to show, at how cheap a rate they could dispense the miraculous virtues which were intrusted to their guardian care. Or rather, it remained to be shown, how far the demon of craft and covetousness could impose, under the veil of sanctity, on the understanding and consciences of men; —how far the name of Christianity could be prostituted, for furthering the purposes of delusion and fraud; —how far the best, and most spiritual religion ever established in the world, might exceed (being corrupted) in folly and debasement the worst. The Mahomedan legend of the miraculous suspension of the dead body

of their prophet, is rational and dignified, when compared with the mass of silly and sickening legends that are connected with the relics of Roman-catholic saints. Judaism, instead of being carnal and inferior, was spiritual and elevated, when compared with what has been called Christianity, as it has sometimes been exhibited in the Roman-catholic church. The worship of the Jew, when he was in the temple, was performed in the clear light of heaven ; nothing but living objects were around him, and instructive types before him ; and when absent from the temple, it was the exercise of the spirit only, unassisted by any object which the eye beheld.

The rites, however, which were performed in the temple, had in them no inherent efficacy, and were therefore to continue but for a season. “ For it is not possible, that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. Wherefore, when he (Christ) cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me : in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above, when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings, and offering for sin, thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, (which are offered by the law.) then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, through the

offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”*

Now, while the declaration, that “without *shedding of blood* there is no remission,” sufficiently exposes the pretension, that there is efficacy, or use, in the sacrifice of the mass, which is an unbloody sacrifice; the reiterated declarations in both of the passages which we have quoted from the Hebrews, that Christ’s sacrifice was one, and offered once for all, precludes the possibility of introducing any other sacrifice for sin whatsoever. The appointment of the sacrifice, like the appointment of the priest, is one and exclusive. So soon as that one sacrifice had been offered, in the body which had been prepared for the work of expiation, the will of God, in the provision made for the removal of human guilt, was at once, and for ever, completely performed. The sacrifices, as well as the priests of the first dispensation, were taken away; that the second, combined and complete in Christ, might alone be established. The satisfaction in the first, though offered by Divine appointment, was not entire; the com-

* Heb. x. 4—14.

placence in them was not perpetual. They were preparatory and introductory, yet, in some respects, imperfect prefigurations of the sacrifice of Christ, who is the Lamb of God, offered once for all, to take away the sin of the world;—of the world, as including its former, as well as subsequent generations. They of former generations without us could not be made perfect. Their sacrifices, unconnected with our sacrifice, were of no value,—could not take away sin. They were rendered efficacious, by the anticipated virtue of the one Christian sacrifice, actually offered in the end of the Old Testament ages, but slain, in the immutable purposes of the Father, from the foundation of the world. He sees the end from the beginning, and calls things which are not as though they were; and his eye, resting upon the sacrifice which his son was to offer, could be satisfied with the sacrifices of the law no further than as they were offered through faith in the promise of his Son; he would suffer their continuance no longer than the time when the promise was fulfilled, and the Son, assuming the body which was prepared, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

It is here important for us to inquire on what grounds the efficacy, the exclusive efficacy of the sacrifice, which Christ has offered for us, rests. It rests on the dignity of his person, and consequent value of his blood. In his person, the divine and human natures are mysteriously united. “God is manifest in the flesh.” The human nature, which he derived through

the virgin from our common father, identified him with us as bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh ; and rendered him a proper substitute to bear the imputation of our guilt, and the expression of divine displeasure which it deserved ; while the Divinity imparted the value and meritorious efficacy of divine perfection to the sacrifice which he offered. If there be *divine perfection* in the sacrifice, then it follows, that nothing can be wanting to it,—that nothing can be associated with it,—that no limits can be put to the range or power of its application,—that no conception of ours,—that no conception of any finite mind, can comprehend all which it is able to effect. The blood which has been shed for the remission of sins, is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son ; and to whatever character it be applied,—in whatever country,—in whatever age of the world,—in whatever multiplicity of cases,—it cleanseth from all sin. It can do this under the Christian dispensation, and now that it is set before us in the word of God, which may be hid in the heart, without the intervention of any outward rites whatever. The eye of faith can look to the atoning sacrifice : the lip of devotion can supplicate pardon on its account ; and then the conscience, which was uneasy, feels tranquillity, by the sprinkling of its blood ; the burden of guilt falls off, and rolls away ; and the heart joys in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom it has received the atonement. This exercise is the habit of the true Christian's life. In its production and preserva-

tion, he is indebted to the written word, which he reads; to the preaching of the gospel which he hears; and to the institution of the supper, which he observes. But then, no portion of the tranquillizing efficacy is in them, but in the sacrifice to which they conduct him, and to which, in their absence, as well as in their enjoyment, he can repair. His conscience is easy, not because he has gone through the forms of an appointed ritual; but because he has applied to Christ, who, in the means of grace, has been set before him;—because he has cast the burden of his guilt upon him, and committed the keeping of his soul unto him. “The life which he lives in the flesh” is, like that of the Apostle, “by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him.” Christ, in the power of his cleansing blood, dwells, by faith, in his heart, the perennial spring of peace and joy,—the hope of glory.

If restrictions exist in the actual enjoyment of the advantages which are provided in the atonement, those restrictions arise, not from any imperfection in the sacrifice itself, but from the censurable inaptitude of those who are, or who should be, the recipients of its virtue. If limitation or fluctuation of peace and joy is found, in the case of any individual who has by faith received the atonement, it results from some remaining obscurity in his views of divine truth; from the contraction of his desires; or from the restraint of his prayers. In Christ we are not straitened, but in ourselves. His kind and gentle reproof to us, as well

as to his disciples of old, is, "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name:" his command,—“Ask, and ye shall receive, and your joy shall be full.” If the believing reception of the atonement is partial only, among those to whom it is proclaimed, the fault is to be attributed to the perverseness of the human mind on religious subjects,—its preference of error to truth,—of darkness to light,—of the transitory and delusive enjoyments of sense, to the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, which are in Christ Jesus. It may be resolved into the reason declared by the Redeemer to the Jews, as matter of deepest lamentation, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;” and it should, in every case, be met by the heart-stirring question of the Apostle, “How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?” If the world is but partially enlightened with the knowledge of the fact, that an atoning sacrifice has been offered for it,—a sufficient reason may be assigned, in the want of enterprise, zeal, and devotedness on the part of those whose duty it has been to send abroad the proclamations of redeeming mercy. The churches which the Apostles formed, before John, who survived his brethren, had rested from his labours, had begun to cool in their first love, and relax from their first works; and having neglected to spread the light, which they possessed, around them, their own candlestick was at length removed out of his place. The mass of those who, in what has been subsequently called the church, have

worn orders of various degrees, and have presumed themselves to be the legitimate successors of the Apostles, have forgotten, what should have been the climax of the proof,—the practical part of the demonstration. It seems not to have occurred to them, that, if they were indeed the successors of the Apostles, apostolic duties became immediately and imperatively binding upon them; the duties of giving up all for Christ, and carrying his gospel to the ends of the earth. Those who did profess to tread in the steps of the Apostles mistook both the object which they had in view, and the means by which they sought its accomplishment. They went, not so much to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ to the heathen, as to extend the boundaries, and increase the influence and revenues, of a secular church. Instead of carrying with them the incorruptible seed of the word of God, to sow, and to water, they tried to transplant the full-grown ritual of the Roman church. The result was what might have been expected. Instead of an abundant harvest, from the germinating seed at length rewarding the labour of the patient husbandman, and furnishing the store for the perpetuation and extension of the same living power and ripening fruits;—the tree, originally a parasite itself, bore no fruit, and soon withered and died. Protestant churches, in their struggle for emancipation from antichristian oppression, almost overlooked the condition of the heathen; and in resting to enjoy the peace which they had with difficulty obtained, lost

much of their purity and vigour. They are but beginning to awaken to a sense of their responsibility, and to a conviction of the fact, that their own vitality can be sustained only as they are obedient to their Master's command, in spreading his gospel through the world.

It argues nothing against the perfection of the sun, that there are many individuals in the world who unhappily are blind, and incapable of receiving its light;—that there are many more who are foolish, who close their eyes in unnatural slumbers, while its radiance is pouring around them, awake when its glories are departing, trim their artificial lights, display the tinsel of their borrowed plumage, and revel through the night, until the sun again arises, rational men go forth to their labours, and creatures, not gifted with reason, lay them down in their dens;—that, there are many extensive and fertile tracts in the world which it illumines, where there is no intelligent eye to enjoy and improve its cheering and vivifying beams. The sun itself is unaffected by these circumstances of earthly restriction and human imperfection. Wherever there has been an open eye to receive its light, from the first day of its creation down to the present hour, it has poured it freely and copiously around. If the human race, in its successive generations, had been multiplied in their numbers a hundred-fold, it could equally, and without individual diminution, have illumined the whole. Its fountain of radiance is still unexhausted, undiminished,

undiminishable. We possess its light as clearly and regularly as did our fathers, and so will our posterity, in their remotest generations. It is the most perfect of God's material works of which we have any knowledge; the most glorious in its appearance, unchanging in its substance, diffusive in its influence, powerful and beneficial in its operation. And yet, in the sun, there is found only created and communicated perfection; in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, there is the perfection which is inherent and divine. In the fulness of its meritorious efficacy, there is all which the church or the world can want; a fulness which, in all its generations, to whatever period they may be extended, and to whatever numbers they may be multiplied, can never be exhausted or diminished. Its glory, diffusive like that of the sun, but infinitely more rich in the value of the influence which it imparts, will at length shine before all nations, will attract every eye, and cheer every dwelling of mankind. Christ, as an atoning sacrifice, has been lifted up upon the cross, and the declaration must be fulfilled, that all men shall be drawn unto him. God, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day, is not slack concerning his promise, which he made to Abraham, as some men count slackness. It has been written with his finger; it lives before him in his word; it is pleaded with him by his people; it forms the basis and warrant of their exertions; the steady and unflinching motive to their perseverance; the assurance of

their ultimate success ; the ground of their anticipated triumph over selfishness, suspicion, reproach, slander, and opposition, that in the seed of Abraham (which is Christ) all the families of the earth shall be blessed. To his one perfect sacrifice for sin, the eye of every guilty descendant of Adam must at length be directed ; on its efficacy every heart be taught exclusively to rest ; for the pardon and full salvation which it freely imparts, every tongue be tuned to melody and joy.

SECTION III.

CHRIST THE ALL-SUFFICIENT PRIEST—THE PREVALENCY OF HIS INTERCESSION.

“AND they truly were many Priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death ; but this, (that is, Christ,) because he continueth ever, hath an unchangable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”*

Now, as the sacrifice of Christ was prefigured daily in the Jewish temple, by the offering of the lamb ; so the intercession of Christ was prefigured with the same frequency by the associated rite, the presentation by the priest of the smoking censer on the altar of incense : “ And thou shalt put it” (the altar of incense) “before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony ; before the mercy-seat, that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning : when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it ; and when Aaron

* Heb. vii. 23—25.

lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it; a perpetual incense before the Lord, throughout your generations.”*

In the blessing of Levi, therefore, Moses, the man of God, said of his sons, “They shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.”† When Solomon sent to the king of Tyre, for materials for building the temple, he informed him, that it was to be dedicated to God, to burn before him “sweet incense,” as well as the burnt-offering, morning and evening. When Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, in the war which was waged against him by the revolted tribes, asserted the justice of his cause, he reminded them, that on his side the priests, which ministered unto the Lord, were the sons of Aaron, and that “they burned unto the Lord, every morning and every evening, burnt sacrifices and sweet incense.”‡ And Luke informs us, respecting Zacharias, that “while he executed the priest’s office before God, in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest’s office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord: and the whole multitude of the people were praying without, at the time of incense.”§

It will be remembered, in illustration of these associated rites, (the bleeding lamb and the priest present-

* Exod. xxx. 6—8.

† Deut. xxxiii. 10.

‡ 2 Chron. xiii. 11.

§ Luke i. 8—10.

ing the censer of incense), that when Noah came forth from the ark, and again took possession of the earth, from which the deluge had swept every living thing that had breathed upon it ; his first work was to build an altar to the Lord. Of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, which had been preserved with himself and his family in the ark, he offered burnt offerings upon the altar. And then, with the prospect of man's renewed apostacy before him, and implying that a sacrifice has power to avert a deserved curse, and secure the perpetuation of undeserved blessings, it is immediately added, "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour ; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake ; for" (because that) "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth : neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. And God *blessed* Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth."*

Now, to the Jews, for their own meditation and instruction, as well as that they might preserve it for future ages, and ultimately for universal circulation, was committed this portion of the oracles of God. And when, while the lamb which had been slain before

* Gen. viii. 21. 22. ; ix. 1.

them, was consuming upon their own altar, they saw also the fragrant cloud of incense from the censer of the priest ascend, and spread itself over the vail, which concealed from the eye the glory of the Shechinah ; by what they saw, and by the wide-spreading odour of the incense which they inhaled, they must have been reminded of the inspired declaration, that when Noah's sacrifice was offered, "the Lord smelled a sweet savour." They had the testimony of their senses to the fact, that with their sacrifice a sweet-smelling odour was coming up before God whom they worshipped. Here also they saw the way in which the punishment which their own sins deserved (for there is no man which sinneth not) was to be adverted, and the undeserved blessings which they needed, were to be obtained. It was, by the interposition between them and God, of a lamb which had been slain ; and of a priest, who was living to present the odour of the sacrifice before him. Let it be remembered, that these associated rites were repeated every morning and every evening in the temple, at the hour when the people assembled for prayer ; and that whether the people were many or few ;—the company of those, who like Anna were never absent from the temple at the hour when its daily services were performed ; or the more numerous assembly of those who dwelt within a Sabbath-day's journey of the holy place, and contented themselves with a weekly attendance on its courts ; or the multitudes who came to it in the be-

ginnings of the months; or the general concourse of the nation three times in the year;—still the *continual burnt offering* was ever the same: one lamb for the altar of burnt offering, and one priest with his censer for the altar of incense. Neither the additional lambs on the Sabbath, nor the bullocks and lambs in the beginnings of their months, nor the multitudinous victims at the festivals, were ever to interfere with the simple institution of the daily service, nor to alter its character; they were to be presented *beside* the continual burnt-offering.*

And, as there was but one altar of either kind for burnt offering or for incense, and from the latter but one censer at a time sent up its fragrant perfume; where, we may ask, on the desecration of that altar, and the rending of the veil before which it stood, is the authority by which another altar of any description has been reared in any other place, or another censer of incense any where enkindled to present before God? The Jewish priests could not rear an altar wherever they chose, nor enkindle the incense as often as they pleased. God had confined them to one place for their service, to one altar for their burnt offerings, to one altar for their incense, to one fire (the fire which he himself had enkindled) in which to consume their sacrifices; to the time at which the incense was to be enkindled, and the manner in which it was

* *Vide* Numb. xxviii.

to be presented. It was death to deviate from his appointment. Fire from his presence consumed the men who engaged in unauthorised rites, or enkindled the incense with any but sacred fire. How comes it to pass, that altars may now be as numerous as places of worship? that they may stand side by side under the same roof, reared to the Virgin, and to the saints, as well as to the Creator? that the sacrifice of the mass can be offered as often as people like to pay for it? that instead of one lamb for many people, there may be many masses for one person? that the censer of incense may be enkindled whenever the priest chooses to officiate, and with whatever fire he likes to employ? We ask, why? and by what authority all this is done? but no answer can be given more satisfactory, than that which Aaron gave to Moses, when he said, "I cast the gold into the fire, and there came out this calf!"*

* No better authority is there for the altars of the Roman-catholic church, than there was for that which Aaron built before the golden calf; or that which Jeroboam built at Bethel, and on which at length, in fulfilment of the inspired prediction, and as an expression of divine displeasure against the innovation, the priests themselves, who had burned incense upon it, were offered. If it be said, that Gideon, and David, and Elijah, each one in his day, built an altar, besides the one which God had appointed for the people, it is answered, That neither of these were priests—that each one of them had received a special commission

It is only where ignorance of what Judaism actually was, prevails, that any religious system, assuming to be analogous to it, can stand. Let the true features of the Jewish hierarchy be once fully laid open to the public eye; and then, any other hierarchy which may have been represented as bearing affinity to it, will be compelled to withdraw its claims, and to have its pre-

from God, which superseded all ordinary rules—and that the altar, which by each of them was built, was not for a constant service for the people, but for a special and individual occasion, in which was manifest the reason for departing from ordinary rules. How jealous the generation which Joshua led into Canaan was, against any innovation on God's appointment, may be seen by referring to their conduct, when they had heard that the two tribes and a half, whose possessions were eastward of Jordan, had built an altar like that which was at Shiloh. "The whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them." And nothing but the assurance that no intention was ever formed of presenting a sacrifice upon it,—that the suspicion of this having been intended was a grief to them,—that they wished only to possess a standing and durable memorial for their descendants of their right to attend the altar which was in Shiloh; could induce the tribes which were in arms, to lay aside the intention which they had formed, "to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt." Joshua xxii.

tensions to relationship considered as a legend of the olden time. In fact, nothing corresponding with Judaism can again be established in our world. Its types were types of things which are now in heaven, and which cannot again be brought down to the earth. They are embodied in the offices of Christ's priesthood, and can never again be required or allowed in the services of men. The heavenly things themselves are presented to our view, and the earthly things, which were the patterns of them, as being no longer necessary, and for ever withdrawn. Christ himself, the Apostle tells us, were he on earth, would not be a priest.* He was not a descendant of Aaron, and therefore could not legally officiate in the temple, in which the Levitical priesthood offered gifts according to the law. He ministers in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. He is entered "not into the holy places made with hands, *which are the figures of the true* ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."† There is now the Shechinah of glory, pervading and enlightening with its radiance every part of the celestial temple ; there is the mercy-seat, to which all nations are now invited to come, and from which, for Gentiles as well as Jews, the copious streams of pardon and salvation flow ; there are the cherubim, not carved in beaten gold, but living in the constant exercise of high intelli-

* Heb. viii- 4.

† Heb. ix. 23.

gence, of burning zeal, of reverential awe, and reverberating widely as the beams of the divine radiance extend, the unceasing cry, "Holy! holy! holy! is the Lord of hosts!" and there, more glorious than Aaron, with blood more precious, with purity more spotless, with titles more numerous and dear to men; with many crowns upon his head, and the names of his people upon his heart, has the great High Priest of our profession entered, to minister for us.

By the new and living way which he has consecrated for us, we have now spiritual access with boldness into the holiest place of the heavenly sanctuary. We are come, not to the terrors of Mount Sinai, from which the law was proclaimed, nor to the bondage of the hills of antichristian Rome, on which the man of sin has been enthroned; but we are "come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven; and to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."* We may be connected by *fraternal* ties, with congregations of faithful men, which constitute, as of old, the *churches* of the respective localities in which we dwell; but we

* Heb. xii. 22—24.

affiliate only with the Jerusalem which is above, which is free, and is the mother of us all. There he officiates, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," to secure the acceptance of the services which we at present perform, and the ultimate and joyful entrance of our disembodied spirits into the splendour of its glories, the dignity of its fellowship, the sanctity of its employments, and the consummation of its bliss.

John, in one of the visions with which he was favoured in the Isle of Patmos, saw him engaged in his work. The symbols of the vision were taken from the Jewish temple, and the title which he wore was one of the many which he has associated with that of priest: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand."* And, that to his intercession the world is indebted, for every exemption which it enjoys from the plagues which its guilt deserves, as well as the saints, for the acceptance of their prayers, is most impressively taught, by the verses which follow: "And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth:

* Rev. viii. 3, 4.

and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels, which had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound.—The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded, and as it were, a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound.”*

* Rev. viii. 5—13.

The incense from the censer, rendered acceptable as sweet smelling odour the prayers of the saints. The restriction of the intercession, emblematically represented by the casting of the censer to the earth, leaves the curses of God's law free course to roll over the regions of corruption and guilt. The censer of the priest of the Christian church, like the rod of Moses, can bring plagues upon the proud, as well as deliverance for the captives, and blessings for the distressed. Like the pillar, interposed between the flock of Israel and the armed hosts of Pharaoh, it is brightness and safety to the former; it is blackness and dismay to the latter.

The casting of the censer, which belongs to the Saviour's priestly office, to the earth, clearly indicates, that it was on account of ecclesiastical corruptions among those for whom it would otherwise have been presented, that the plagues which followed were inflicted. The plagues which followed the opening of the seals, which are described in the sixth chapter, fell upon the Roman empire when it was a persecuting pagan power; those which we have quoted, and which followed the trumpets, after the empire became Christian.* That the pagan empire, in which Christianity

* "As the seals foretold the state and condition of the Roman empire before and till it became christian, so the *trumpets* foreshew the fate and condition of it afterwards. 'The sound of the trumpet,' as Jeremiah says, and as every one understands it, 'is the alarm of war,' and the sounding of these trumpets is designed to rouse and excite the na-

had been so repeatedly persecuted, should have been visited with expressions of divine displeasure, can excite no surprise; but, that the Roman empire christianized, with Christianity for the first time established and endowed, instead of enjoying, as uninspired men would have predicted, an unmingled cup of prosperity, should have the prophetic page of its history illumined with not one cheering ray of promise; relieved by not one line of relenting pity; but, like Ezekiel's scroll, written within and without, only with lamentation, mourning and woe;—that its woes should be more unmingled, and in more unbroken succession, than the prophetic page of its pagan history contained, does induce us with astonishment to ask, How can this be! The only answer which can be given is, that Christianity, as it appeared before the eye of the world, in the character and ceremonial observances of the mass of its professors, was no longer that which Christ had originally made it; was no longer that which in his government of the earth he would own; was no longer that for which, in his priestly office, he would intercede. Those who composed what was called the church, had made or chosen other priests besides him, and were inhaling the perfume of censers, which he

tions against the Roman empire, called a third part of the world, as perhaps including the third part of the world, and being seated principally in Europe, the third part of the world at that time.”—*Bishop Newton on the Prophecies.*

had never authorized. He cast his own, whose efficacy was disregarded, filled with the fire of indignation, amongst them; and awful voices followed, and thunders rolled, and lightnings flashed, and earthquakes inspired their terror, and plagues spread their desolation around, and sounds of Woe! woe! woe! by reason of the voices of the trumpets, were heard.

There are no sins which God visits with heavier judgments, than he does the sins of those who corrupt the institutions of his worship; because there are no sins, which, in their consequences, inflict such injury upon mankind. When Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not, there went fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with the two hundred and fifty princes of the people, rose up before Moses, and murmured on account of the sacerdotal pre-eminence which Aaron possessed, and wished to usurp the priesthood which had been given exclusively to him, they and their adherents miserably perished. The two hundred and fifty leaders of the usurpation were allowed to take the censers in their hand, but the experiment which they made in an unauthorized office, was fearful and ruinous, both to themselves and their adherents;—their adherents were swallowed up in an earthquake, and they themselves were consumed by fire. “And it

came to pass as he (Moses) had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them ; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods ; they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them ; for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.”* The brass of which their censers were made, was afterwards, by divine command, converted into broad plates for a covering to the altar, to be a sign before the children of Israel, a memorial to them, “that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron come near to offer incense before the Lord ; that he be not as Korah and as his company.”†

If those, who have taken upon themselves the office in the Christian church to which Christ only has been appointed by the Father, who burn incense without any authority from God, who kindle it with fire which never came from heaven, nor ever flamed on any altar which the Scriptures warrant, were well to consider this memorial, it would teach them a very different application of the passages which we have quoted,

* Numb. xvi. 31—35.

† Numb. xvi. 40.

from those which they are accustomed to make. They would see that the correspondence of the cases most closely and ominously affects themselves; and that there is reason for serious apprehension, on account of the antichristian nature of the office which they have sustained, and the work which they have discharged.

The memorial of the Old Testament church should also be connected with that, scarcely less obvious and impressive, which has been presented in the New,—the scourges of every name which repeatedly desolated the Christian Roman empire, and which have embodied in admonitory facts the prophetic outline of its woes. How many times have the places, which men calling themselves Christian priests, pretended, by unauthorized rites, to consecrate, been palpably desecrated before the world, and trodden down by the foot of barbarian rudeness, and Mahomedan scorn! How often have the altars, on which incense uncommanded smoked, been overturned, and stained with the blood of those who ministered before them! How has the eastern part of the Roman empire, on which the woes of the fifth and sixth trumpets more especially fell, and which once comprised the provinces most illustrious and flourishing, been desolated, depopulated, and politically and morally debased! There Christianity first spread and flourished, and was first corrupted; and there the scourge of the false prophet has been most frequently and fearfully applied. Next

to the sufferings of the Jews, who deprecated all share in the work of the Priest of the Christian Church, and exclaimed, "His blood be upon us and our children," have been the sufferings of the Christians who disregarded his work, and trusted to the priesthood which men had usurped. That which was spoken of old to degenerate Israel, has been illustrated and fulfilled in degenerate Christendom: "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled; this shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

The people and the priesthood of the western regions of Christianity, while they contemplate the memorial which is presented for their consideration in the east, should remember, that the prophetic woes of the seventh trumpet are not yet exhausted. They are commensurate with the existence of corruption in the church, and they hang with direful portent over the seat and focus of corruption—the mystic Babylon. In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, the mystery of God is to be finished; corruptions are to be exposed, and punished, and cleared away from the church; and then the world to be universally blessed.

If, however, against those who turn aside from the work of Christ, to trust to the inventions of men, the fire of the disregarded censer burns with indignation, the truth remains inviolable and unchanging, that he is able to save them to the uttermost, who come unto

God by him ; because for them he ever liveth to make intercession. Such there have been in every period of the Christian degeneracy, preserved, like the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, in the period of Jewish degeneracy. They may have been so obscure, retired, or scattered, as to have escaped the attention of the seducing Jezebel of the Christian church ; or their names may have been cast out by her as evil, and handed down to posterity with epithets of reproach ; or they may have been sometimes the victims of her cruelty and rage. They have however formed the true church, against which the gates of hell have never prevailed. Their principles have been preserved, professed, and perpetuated. They are now proclaimed, and rapidly spreading through the world. There is a daily augmenting number, who, notwithstanding the minor and non-essential differences which prevail among them in ritual and forms, yet approximate in heart, and enjoy the unity of spirit, while they hold with firm and unshaken hand the cardinal truths which the Apostles taught ; that there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus ; that only by the baptismal power of his Spirit applying to the conscience the virtue of atoning blood, can they enjoy the pardon of sin ; that only by the prevalence of his intercession can they obtain acceptance with God, and enjoy the light of his favour. They have access through Christ, as their only priest, by one Spirit, unto God, as their Father. They are

built, not upon the foundation of any hierarchy of human construction, but upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. The incense from his censer is still presented with the prayers of *all saints*; and there are four circumstances in the character and work of the Priest through whom they are presented, which combine to secure the acceptance of the prayers, and the salvation of those by whom they are offered.

I. The Priest who intercedes, *is the perfect representative* of all those who come to God by him.

When the Jewish high priest entered once a year into the holiest place of the temple, with the blood of atonement, and the censer of incense; he wore upon his ephod the breast-plate, on which was engraved the names respectively of all the tribes of Israel. He appeared before God, therefore, as the representative of the whole of the people. He sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat the blood which had been shed to atone for the whole, and presented the incense on behalf of the whole. But, while he went within the veil, as the representative of the whole of the people, the supposition, that there was any merit in himself, or in any of his family, was carefully excluded, by the appointment of a sin offering, the blood of which was to be shed and sprinkled for himself and for his house, before he engaged on the part of the people. The

supposition, that any merit could ever be possessed by any of his race, which could avail either for themselves, or for the people on whose behalf they officiated, was precluded, by the appointment of the sin offering for the priest and his house being as perpetual and indispensable as that for the people. The altar also, to which the priests only could approach, was to be "cleansed and hallowed from uncleanness," by the sprinkling of the blood upon it; to teach, that so far from the priests conveying any meritorious efficacy to the people, by the services which they discharged for them, those services themselves were accompanied with defiling imperfections, which nothing but atoning blood could cleanse away. "But such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated (perfected for his work) for evermore."*

He was perfected for the work of his intercession, as for his oblation, by the union of the divine and human natures in his person. The latter identified him with us in every thing but our defilement, which is

* Heb. vii. 26—28.

hateful to God ; the former not only gives him access to the Father for us, but also agreement in purpose and will with him, in reference to every blessing which is to be bestowed upon us. On the humanity, unblemished and spotless, the eye of the Father rests ; and ever since the Son assumed it, has rested with entire complacence ; in the union of the two natures, he sees the provision of his own unfathomable wisdom and grace, for the combined advancement of our interests and his own glory ; while moreover, the body in which the Redeemer pleads for us, is the body in which, by the Father's provision and appointment, he made the atoning sacrifice for us upon the cross.

David was well represented at the court of Saul, for the king's son was his mediator and friend ; and whatever Jonathan could accomplish, David might with confidence expect. The sons of Jacob were well represented at the court of Pharaoh, for next to him in the kingdom, and the dispenser of its treasures, was Joseph their brother, who considered his own elevation as the special arrangement of Providence for their preservation and supply. These cases, however, in their combination, but inadequately illustrate the perfection of the mode, in which the Redeemer represents the members of his church in heaven. The love which he exercises towards them, infinitely exceeds, in disinterestedness and strength, that which Jonathan displayed towards David ; it induced him, "though he was rich, for their sakes to become poor, that they,

through his poverty, might be made rich." As their *friend*, he laid down his life for them; and notwithstanding their frailty, destitution, and ingratitude, having assumed their nature, he is not ashamed to call them his brethren. His elevation in their nature, regards, as its first and special object, a provision for their supply and security; and for this purpose it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. The Father, with whom, and by whose appointment he intercedes, regards both his person and his work with love, such as can dwell only in him who is the fountain of love, and can never be comprehended by those who only receive and communicate from the stream. By the work which he performs for us, the most profound principles of his Father's government are developed in brightness and glory, for the contemplation and admiration of the intelligent universe; and the dearest, because the most gracious purposes of his heart, receive their accomplishment. In his person, there is the concentration of all divine perfections, with all created excellence. Through him, God manifests himself to his creatures, links himself with them, and pours the richest streams of blessings for their enjoyment. But for his atonement and intercession; his spotless sacrifice, purposed or actually offered; his fragrant censer, anticipated or actually presenting,—no favour could have been shown to any of our guilty race, in any age of the world. The prophetic, or retrospective history, of every descending and diverging

family and tribe of fallen Adam, could have been written only in lamentation, and mourning, and woe. No covenant of peace with the earth, or with man upon it, could have been made. No altar, with its bleeding victim, showing to the guilty how mercy might be obtained, could have been reared upon the ground, which, for man's sin, was accursed. No preacher of righteousness could have called the wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and to return to the Lord, who would have mercy upon him, and to God, who would abundantly pardon. No tabernacle of worship could have been constructed, no priest could have been consecrated, to show by significant emblems, how the guilt of sin would at length be removed, and a way be opened into the secret place of communion with the Most High. No bright and cheering ray of prophetic promise could have dispelled the gloom of captivity and sorrow, by opening to the eye the dawn of a better and a brighter day. No angelic choir could have visited the plains of Bethlehem with glad tidings of great joy; and have ravished the listening ear with the harmony of celestial music, to the song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will towards men." No ministry of reconciliation could have caught the substance and the spirit of the song, and have made, as Judea with the trumpet of the jubilee, the wide earth to reverberate, and become joyful with the sound. No bright prospect of millennial peace, and liberty, and

glory, could have been spread before the eye, to relieve the heart which is burdened on account of the follies and the vices, the yoke of civil tyranny, and galling slavery, and gloomy superstition, and foul and bloody idolatry, under which the mass of the human race are still bowed down, and fettered, and oppressed. No foretaste of joy unspeakable, could have cheered under wasting labour, and unmerited reproach. No anticipation of the public vindication and glory of the resurrection morn, could have rendered joyful and triumphant the hour of nature's dissolution, and the surrender of the body to the darkness and corruption of the grave. For every sweet ingredient in the daily cup of life; for every source of consolation and hope in the hour of death; for every thing which can conspire to render immortality an object of desire; a life of glory, unclouded in its brightness, as well as unlimitable in its duration; we are indebted to the oblation and the intercession of our great High Priest. Blessed are they, who, emancipated from the fetters of sensual and superstitious bondage, have entered, by the new and living way which Christ has opened, into the holiest of all; "who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; *whither the forerunner is for us entered*, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Let the proclamation of spiritual liberty go forth, and all the dwellers

upon earth arise, accept the freedom which the gospel gives ; and, walking in the truth, have fellowship with God by him, who represents their nature in his presence, and ever lives, the interceding Priest, and powerful Advocate, of all who seek salvation in his name.

II. The Priest who intercedes, *perfectly comprehends the wants* of all those who come to God by him.

When the High Priest went into the holiest place of the temple, as the representative of the Jewish people, besides the moral imperfection which attached to him, arising from the inherent defilement of his nature, and which required the blood of a sin offering to remove ; there was also a natural imperfection, arising from the limitation of human powers and faculties, and which rendered his service rather an emblematic, than an actual representation of the people before God. On the breastplate which he wore, there was room only for the collective designations of the tribes, not for the multitudinous names of the individuals, which in the respective tribes were included ; and in the comprehension of his mind and heart, there was room only for the general and public concerns of the multitude ; not for the personal and private affairs of the individuals of which the multitude was composed.

Now, whoever would adequately and perfectly represent others before the eye of the omniscient God, must see and understand their cases respectively, as

they are seen and understood by him ; must comprehend the whole of their circumstances, interests and wants, in all the multiplicity of their bearings, and the magnitude of their entire combination. This however no mere man can do, in reference to any others of his fellow-men. He is not competent to its performance, were it required but for one individual ; and were that the individual with whom he is most intimately acquainted, in whose welfare he is most deeply interested, and whose character he has most constantly studied. No man can know the heart of another as God does ; can comprehend the whole case and interests of a creature which is born in sin, which stains every day of its life with transgression, which is accountable to a righteous tribunal, and is the responsible heir of an immortal existence. No man indeed perfectly knows himself, all the aspects of his character, all the bearings of his interests, all the accumulation of his wants, as they appear before God.

In this view of the case, how imperfect must have been Aaron's representation of the Jewish people ! The mass of those who assembled on the day of atonement, in the dense and multitudinous concourse, could have but an imperfect view of the person of their priest, and of the rites which in their presence he discharged. And when his eye looked around upon the people, it was but a general impression of their multitude which he could receive, and but a feeble conception of their collected wants which he could form.—

How many the countenances to him entirely unknown !
 How many the names of which he had never heard !
 How multifarious the personal and domestic circumstances to which he was a total stranger ! It must be evident, therefore, that as there was no merit in his personal character, to avail any thing for the people ; so neither could there be efficacy in his official work. He could not carry the names, he did not know the persons ; much less could he comprehend the diversified circumstances and wants of the people, in their individual capacity, when he went for them before God. His representation was figurative, not actual and efficacious. It availed for the people, only as they rose from the type to the promised antitype, and derived and enjoyed the anticipated virtue of his more perfect work.

If Aaron could but *figuratively* represent the people, who could assemble in one place, who spoke one language, whom in their congregated mass his eye could survey ; how are the difficulties of *actual* representation multiplied, when the persons to be represented are scattered over the face of the earth ; are infinitely diversified in their language, their national distinctions, their social, domestic, and personal circumstances ! It is evident, that no human or angelic powers can be competent to the work. The human mind is bewildered at the very threshold of the subject, and labours in vain to stretch its thoughts over the extent of the scene which must be surveyed ; and to rise to

a conception of what his powers must be, by whom the work can be efficiently performed. It comes however to the conclusion that he must be omniscient and divine, who can intelligently undertake it ; and when satisfied that this is the case with the Priest of the Christian church, we rest assured, that his work, though to us unsearchable, must be perfectly discharged. We have the testimony of the Scripture to the fact, that he is omniscient and divine : “ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* “ His eyes are as a flame of fire ;”† and his own declaration is, “ All the churches shall know that I am he which searchest the reins and hearts.”‡ “ Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men,”§ was the language in which his assembled Apostles, reverently adoring the omniscience of his character, addressed their prayer to him. To omniscience there can be no confusion, no difficulty, no labour in the work ; nor could be, even though there were as many millions to be represented at one time, as there are individuals. In his divine perfection, the priest who intercedes for us, surveys the whole of those who come to God by him ; reads their hearts, as well as listens to the prayers of their lips ; comprehends the character and the minutest circumstances of each individual of the immense but widely scattered multitude, and embodies the aggregate of the whole in one act of

* John i. 1.

† Rev. i. 14.

‡ Rev. ii. 23.

§ Acts i. 24.

representation, as easily and perfectly as though it was but the case of one individual only, who required and enjoyed his exclusive attention and regard.

But then omniscience belongs only to him; and this statement, which is so obvious as to require no proof, at once supersedes the pretensions that are put forth, on behalf of the celestial patrons and intercessors, on which the members of the Roman-catholic church are accustomed to call. Which of these, supposing them all to be in heaven, (a case more than doubtful in reference to many who are in the calendar of saints,) have power to look down upon the earth, or liberty to visit it whenever they please;—have eyes, with which they can look into the human heart;—or ears, into which they can receive the sounds of the human voice;—or faculties, by which, without distraction, they can attend to the respective cases of hundreds or thousands, who, from different parts of the earth and the sea, may be calling upon them for succour, at the same period of time? Until these questions can be satisfactorily answered, and their commission to intercede for us, can be shown in some better authenticated, and more authoritative document than the pages of the Roman calendar, we must be content with one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus; and rejoice in the assurance, that to his omniscient eye our whole case lies open, and in his exclusive appointment by the Father, all the wants which it can include have been contemplated, and for them full provision made.

III. The Priest who intercedes, *kindly sympathises in the infirmities* of all those who come to God by him.

If the Jewish high priest could not comprehend the wants and circumstances of the people individually whom he represented, much less could he become acquainted with the various emotions of their hearts, and sympathise in all the diversity of their feelings. He was indeed liable to mistake, in the individual cases which came occasionally before him, as well as to the indifference towards others, which is too common to our degenerate and selfish nature. Thus Eli mistook the case of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and attributed to excess of wine the movement of her lips, which was produced by the sorrows of her heart.—Comparatively few are the individuals who know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary, and soothe, by the exercise of sympathy, the heart which is suffering and oppressed. How much were the sorrows of Job aggravated, by the well intended, but unskilful addresses of the three friends, who came to mourn with him, and to comfort him. Susceptibility of feeling, experience of sorrow, acquaintance with our nature, in all the variety of its constitutional tendencies,—gentleness, patience, wisdom to select the time, and modify the manner, of pouring the balm into the wound, and binding up the broken heart,—are all necessary to him, whose work it is to comfort them that mourn.

Now these qualifications were displayed in their most perfect combination, by him who is the High Priest of the Christian church, during the period of his manifestation in the flesh. It was predicted of him, that he should not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;" that he should "bind up the broken-hearted;" that he should "proclaim liberty to the captives;" that he should "give to them that mourn, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." He opened his commission at Nazareth, by quoting the prediction, and extorting from unwilling witnesses the testimony, that it was fulfilled by the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. He commenced his sermon to the multitude upon the mount, with words more sweet and soothing to the troubled heart, than were the tones of David's harp, which could smooth the rugged brow of Saul, and calm the tumultuous passions of his breast. His gracious concern for us, under the burdens which we are called to bear, and his commendation of himself to our confidence, were expressed in the invitation which he gave: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you; and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

In the sympathetic features of his character, he was fairer than the children of men, and therefore full of grace were his lips. His humanity was formed, not

in the coarse and imperfect mould from which is produced our degenerate frame ; but in the refined and perfect mould from which was produced the exalted manhood of him, into whom God breathed the breath of life. Sin had not impaired the delicate and sensitive perceptions of his nature, had not chilled the fountain of its feelings, nor contracted the channels through which the warm current of the affections flow. No letter of the law of love was wanting, or obscurely written upon the fleshly table of his heart ; no expression of its exercise can be required, which was not found in his life ; no illustration of its power can equal, can compare, with that which he displayed in his death. Humanity constituted like his, was prompt to feel the woes of others. The sympathetic strings were constantly attuned and tremulously sensitive. They vibrated at every sigh of the sorrowful spirit, and responded, full and deep, to every sound of human woe. There was, indeed, something approaching to identity of feeling with every subject of disease and sorrow which his eye beheld. He took the infirmities, and bare the sicknesses of those who were brought before him to be healed, by sympathy with the sufferers in his humanity, before he exerted the power of his divinity for their relief.

That this was the sense in which the disciples applied to him the passage from Isaiah's prophecies, is evident, from the connexion in which it stands, with what must have been one of the most interesting and

impressive scenes of the Saviour's life. He had taught in the synagogue of Capernaum, and, in the presence of the congregation, had released from his unhappy bondage a man who had been oppressed by the devil. He had retired from the synagogue to the house of Peter, and there had restored Peter's wife's mother from a fever. The fame of the miracles spreads abroad, and so soon as the sun was sitting, and, according to their notions of the sanctity of the sabbath, it was lawful for them to carry the sick from their dwellings, "all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto him."* So deep and general was the interest which had been excited by the miracles which had been performed in the earlier part of the day; so sanguine the anticipations that were indulged of the result of bringing all the sick which the place contained to him; and so universal the desire to see what he would do for them, "*that all the city was gathered together at the door.*"† Nor were the expectations which had been formed disappointed. "He laid his hands upon every one of the sick, and healed them."

The number of the sick, their cases respectively, the circumstances connected with any of them, are not related; and therefore, our impressions of this most extraordinary scene are exceedingly vague and inadequate. Perhaps a more legitimate or interesting

* Luke iv. 40.

† Mark i. 33.

subject for the pencil, is no where to be found in the Saviour's history, than is presented in this passage. But he must be a master in his art, whose imagination, feeling, judgment, and taste, could supply all which is comprehended in the two verses of the Evangelist; "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, *Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.*"* Minds of ordinary power must be content to receive their illustration of the manner in which the Redeemer, by the tenderness his sympathy, identified his feelings with those of the distressed, from individual cases, in the relation of which some of the circumstances are supplied. And what can be required more perfect, than is to be found in the simple recital of the compassion which he exercised towards the widow of Nain, and the tears which he shed at the grave of Lazarus! There must be something very deficient in the heart of that individual, who can surrender himself to the guidance of the disciple whom Jesus loved, and approach the grave of Lazarus, without being disposed to weep also.

As the constitution of our Redeemer's humanity rendered him more susceptible than we can be, to the suf-

* Matt. viii. 16, 17.

ferings of others ; so it gave a pungency proportionably great, to the sorrows which were peculiarly his own. The fortitude of superior minds under unmerited reproach, does not result from hardihood of feeling ; that is the unenvied privilege of the leader of the mob, who addresses himself to the worst passions of our nature, because they are the most easily excited ; whose work is defamation, and who has no character of his own to lose. In a virtuous mind, fortitude under calumny and injustice is the result of principle, struggling against feelings, which are acute and sensitive, and deeply seated in the soul. The struggle is always painful, and, if in public, the consciousness of rectitude supports, and the brow is consequently tranquil, and the countenance serene ; yet in secrecy, the power of feeling prevails, and the eye poureth forth tears unto God. The struggle is sometimes too violent for the fragile frame in which it takes place, and the most redeeming specimens of our fallen nature are shattered and broken by its force. Those who know what this struggle means, may be soothed by the assurance, that in it the Redeemer can sympathize, because, through the severest conflict he himself has gone. They will see the reason why such sombre hues were thrown upon the path which he trod, and which gradually deepened in their shade, till they closed in total darkness around the mount on which he bowed his head and died. They will see why the prophet, sketching the more prominent features of

his character, describes him as “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” They will see why the prayers and supplications of his more retired devotions were offered up “with strong crying and tears.”

If, in proportion as one has suffered himself, he knows how to soothe and succour others who are in distress ; then, to no one can we turn for sympathy and succour with such confidence, as to him who is, above all others, “a brother born for adversity.” No where can there be found a history to compare with his. Innocence, purity, benevolence, gentleness, kindness, in their perfect combination, and constant exercise, daily encountering rudeness, privation, suspicion, reproach, calumny, malignity, treachery ; and, at length, trampled to the dust by infuriated cruelty, and ignominious scorn. Never was there a heart like his, to feel ; and, therefore, never could there be a tongue like his, to comfort and console. Pungent, diversified, and accumulated, though his own sorrows were ; by them he would not allow himself to be absorbed, nor diverted from his course of mercy. They rather formed part of his qualification for his work, and furnished motives for its diligent discharge. He went about doing good, preaching the Gospel to the poor, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. Nor, when the last and bitterest cup of suffering was just about to be presented to his tremulous lips, could he be unmindful of those who had been with him in his previous temptations. His last discourse to them,

as it was the most full, so was it also the most consolatory, he had ever delivered. The deep pensiveness, which preceded the unutterable anguish of his soul, displayed and relieved itself in the tender pathos of his valedictory address. With what tones of feeling must many of the passages of that address have been delivered! How they must have penetrated and thrilled through the breasts of those into whose ears they were poured! Their distant vibrations have still power to subdue, and melt the soul. The undecaying words of the most precious legacy which ever was bequeathed, are still often read with tearful eyes, and strong emotion of heart: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."*

Now it must be remembered, that one of the objects which were to be accomplished by the Saviour's sufferings on earth, was to prepare him for entering on the work, which, as Intercessor, he now discharges in heaven: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."† "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

* John xiv. 27.

† Heb. ii. 10.

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."*

How the glorified humanity of our Redeemer is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, it may be difficult or impossible for us clearly and fully to understand. The subject is in some measure connected with the great mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh." It is sufficient for us to know,—that one purpose to be accomplished by his incarnation ; by his dwelling three and thirty years in our world of affliction and death ; by his passing through one continuous course of humiliation, privation, and suffering ; was to prepare him for his work of intercession, by giving him a fellow-feeling with our sorrows ;—that he has in heaven the most distinct and realizing remembrance of every suffering which he endured on earth, and of every emotion, which, under suffering, he felt ;—that by our humanity, which he still wears, as well as by the offices which he sustains, and the promises which he has left in his word, he still feels himself pledged for us, linked to us, and identified with us ;—and that he clearly and minutely sees how far our sufferings and emotions resemble those, of which he was himself the subject. If reason can climb no higher, faith lends her

* Heb. ii. 17, 18 ; iv. 15.

wings to ascend the final step, and place us in the full enjoyment of the consolatory truth, that in the tender sympathy of his heart with us, as well as in the power of his arm for us, he is, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." We may go through every scene of his history, as it is related by the Evangelists; we may cherish the deepest impression which can be derived from every individual act of mercy which is recorded; we may combine the result of the whole, in one clear and powerful conception, the influence of which shall never weaken or decay; and yet be assured, that we are far from apprehending the extent and tenderness of the condescending sympathy which he still exercises with every sufferer, who comes to God by him. In proportion as we increase in the knowledge of this fact, our devotional exercises will be characterized by freedom and delight; our duties, otherwise difficult, will become easy and pleasant; our sorrows will be sweetened by ingredients, which will make them blessed in their endurance, as well as in their result; we shall be able to rejoice in tribulation, and in every thing to give thanks.

How are those to be pitied, who, instead of having the character of the sympathizing Redeemer unfolded to their view, are directed to the saints, who cannot even hear the prayers which are presented to them. If they could hear—if they could succour—who, knowing the character of the Redeemer, and listening to the invitations which he gives, would have recourse

to them? How obviously false—how subversive of his honour, and of the design for which he came into the world—how deeply injurious to the peace and happiness of men—is the principle which is assumed; that the saints, because they partake of our nature only, are more ready to pity and to sympathize with us, than is He, who, with all human excellencies, combines all divine perfections!

Where have those who assume this injurious principle learnt what our nature is, when not associated with him, who is Immanuel, God with us? Not in the school in which David was taught. He said, “Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.”* Where have they learnt the character of God? Not where Isaiah was inspired to teach it. He describes him as saying, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”† With what eyes have they read the Gospels, and marked the contrast between the character of the Redeemer, and those of his disciples, whom they have placed highest in the calendar of the saints? Can they hope for more kindness and pity from Peter, than from the Redeemer? Let Malchus correct their folly, by telling them, who struck the blow which was

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 14.

† Isa. lv. 8, 9.

intended to cleave him in the midst, and which, glancing aside, cut off his ear ; and who, putting forth his finger, though it was to touch one who had come out with the multitude against himself, restored it, as it was before. Can they hope for more pity and kindness from James and John, than they can from the Redeemer ? Let the Samaritan villagers correct their folly, by telling, who would have called down fire from heaven to consume them ; and who rebuked the fiery indignation of the brethren, and said unto them, “ Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” Can they hope for more prompt and condescending attention to their desires from any of the Apostles than from the Saviour ? Let the women who brought their little children, that they might receive a blessing, tell them, by whom they were roughly repelled ; and who, displeased because they had been repelled, said, “ Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God ;” and then, exceeding the desires and expectations of the mothers themselves, took the children up in his arms, as well as put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

Whatever kindness and pity was possessed by the Apostles, or by any of the saints, at any period of their history, they copied from the example of Christ, and exercised in the power of his grace. In him, there is the original and ever-flowing fountain ; in them, the

drop only, which the vessel formed by him could receive and contain. Let who will go to the saints, we are content with access only to the Saviour. We can find no condescension like his, who stooped from heaven to earth, and veiled the glories of his deity beneath the humble form of our humanity ;—no compassion like his, who bare our griefs, and carried our sorrows ;—no long-suffering like his, who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself ;—no pity like his, who wept over Jerusalem, when its inhabitants were just about to reject and crucify him ;—no grace so prompt and abounding as his, who, in answer to the request of lips which had previously reviled him, said, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise ;”—no gentleness like his, who took little children in his arms, and folded them to his bosom, before he put his hands upon them, to bless them ;—no sympathy like his, who wept at the grave of Lazarus, in fellow-feeling with the disconsolate mourners, before he exerted his divine power to raise the dead, and change the tears of sorrow into the raptures of joy. So, though he is himself above the power of death, and reigning in the regions of immortality ; yet is he touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who dwell around the sepulchres of our departed brethren—the sepulchres in which, weary at length of life’s vanities and vexations, we ourselves must rest. But he is contemplating the day, at whose sweet dawn, the stone shall be rolled away from them ; and his voice shall call us, to put on

incorruption and immortality, and to come forth, radiant in his own image; the day, when our sorrows, in which now he sympathizes, shall be changed for the fulness of joy, and he shall lead us to living fountains of waters, and wipe away all tears from our eyes.

IV. The Priest who intercedes, *is able effectually to bless* all those who come to God by him.

The priests who preceded and prefigured Christ, not only went to God with the offerings which they were appointed to present for the people, but they also came from God to the people, authorized to pronounce his blessing upon them. The Apostle Paul, on this ground, argues the superiority of Melchisedec to Aaron; because, not only did Levi, the progenitor of Aaron, pay tithes to him in Abraham,—he also received the blessing from his lips. No contradiction can be offered to the fact, that “the less is blessed of the better.” Melchisedec, therefore, as the superior, in his official character of priest of the most high God blessed Abraham; blessed him that had the promises. The form of the blessing is recorded: “Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.”*

The Aaronic priesthood had also its divinely ap-

* Gen. xiv. 19, 20.

pointed form for blessing the people: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise shall ye bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."* In the recapitulation of the law, which Moses delivered just before his own death, and the entrance of the people into the land of promise, this interesting part of the work of the priests is associated with their ordinary and perpetual ministrations: "And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord."† In the same manner, when David made his arrangements for the services of the temple, which his son was to build, it was recorded, that "Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the Lord, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name."‡

The work of pronouncing the blessing appears to have been the concluding part of his duty, to whom the lot for burning incense fell. Hence, therefore, when Zacharias was detained by the angel who appeared to him at the altar of incense, beyond the ac-

* Numb. vi. 22—26.

† Deut. xxi. 5.

‡ 1 Chron. xxiii. 13.

customed time which the service occupied, the people *waited for him*, and marvelled that he tarried so long. They could not depart, till the priest, who presented the incense before the Lord, had returned to pronounce the blessing upon them. On this occasion, when Zacharias did return, he could not enunciate the blessing. He could only make the sign, by lifting up his hands in the accustomed form ; but there was no voice. As a reproof for his incredulous reception of the gracious message which the angel delivered to him, the power of discharging the most interesting part of his official work was withdrawn, and he stood with uplifted hands before the people, who were waiting for the blessing from his lips,—but speechless.

The child, whose birth was announced to him at the altar of incense, was never himself to approach that altar ; was never to stand up in his father's stead, in the services of the course of Abia. He was to be the herald of the Priest of the new order, by whom all the courses of the old were to be superseded and removed. The sacrifice and the oblation were to cease ; the fire with which the incense was enkindled was to be extinguished ; and was there not an indication here given, that the stream of blessing was also to be diverted into a new channel, and to flow henceforth through his work, whom all the priests of the preceding dispensations had combined to prefigure, and whose lips would never lose their power to bless ? Let it however be carefully observed, that it was when

the sacrifice had been offered, and the prayers of the people, coincident with the incense from the censer of the priest, had been presented, that the blessing was returned from him whose favour these rites had propitiated, and the people were dismissed in peace ; and then will be seen, in the light derived from these divinely appointed Jewish institutions, a clear and beautiful illustration of facts, which are recorded in the Gospel history, and which are connected with the work of our perfect and ascended Priest.

After he had been lifted up in the presence of the people, as the Lamb of God, by the offering of which, once for all, sin was for ever to be taken away, he went, the living Priest, into the celestial temple, to present the incense from his censer, with the prayers of his disciples, and to return upon them the blessings which he had promised to bestow. From the time that he departed out of their sight, exercising faith in the work which he was gone to perform, and the promises that he would not leave them comfortless, but would, in the communications of his Spirit, come to them, they “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”* Nor did they wait in vain for his return with the blessing, and with such a blessing as never before were any of our race privileged to receive. “And when the day of Pente-

* Acts i. 14.

cost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* By this extraordinary dispensation, which they received as the result of the commenced intercession of their ascended and divinely accepted Priest, they were by open manifestation declared to be preeminently blessed of the Lord. The blessing came not in word only, but in *demonstration* of the Spirit and of power. As the disciples of the crucified Jesus, they were under the frown of man’s displeasure ; but the Lord lifted up the light of his countenance upon them, and gave them peace. The Shechinah had withdrawn from the temple, in which the priests of the Aaronic order still ministered according to the rites of the now abrogated law ; but it descended with more softened radiance, to authenticate, illumine, and bless the church, which henceforth was to become the holy and spiritual temple of the living God.

On the opening of the tabernacle, and subsequently of the temple, for the worship which was presented by the Jews, fire came forth from the presence of the

* Acts ii. 1—4.

Lord, to enkindle the sacrifice prepared upon the altar, and to consecrate the respective structures for divine service : so, when the Christian church was opened for all the nations of the world, in all their various languages ; and to witness and report which opening, representatives from all parts of the earth were present,* the same impressive token of divine authority and favour was given. But then, let it be observed, that they were the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, which were here authenticated, as acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, in the Christian church ;—not the bleeding victim, nor the unbloody sacrifice, presented on an altar. The fire celestial, assumed the form of

* “ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans ? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born ? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamiã, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this ? ”—Acts ii. 5—12.

the tongue ; the member of the body which God has made to celebrate his praise, address his throne of mercy, and proclaim his truth. The tongue was cloven, that by the living, glowing, tremulous, movement of its divided tip, a significant emblem might be presented, of the power which was conveyed to praise, and to preach, in diverse languages ; and of the fervour and constancy with which both parts of its service should be performed.

The same divine authentication, in the same form, and for the same purpose, was subsequently given, when Peter opened the kingdom in the house of Cornelius, and the Gentiles were first actually admitted into the bosom of the Christian church. When Peter, with the two household servants and the devout soldier, the messengers which had been sent for him, arrived at the house, he found *many* that were come together. And while he was speaking to them, of the testimony which the prophets had given to the efficacy of the Redeemer's atonement, for the remission of the sins of every individual who should believe in him, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them *speak with tongues, and magnify God.*"* And, that the outward radiant

* Acts x. 44—46.

form of the tongue accompanied the inward miraculous power to magnify God, in languages previously unknown, is obviously implied, in the words which Peter employed, when he rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order, to the Apostles and brethren that were assembled at Jerusalem, and amongst whom a contention had been raised, because he had gone in to men uncircumcised, and had eaten with them. “As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost *fell on them, as on us at the beginning.*”†

And while the divine authentication was given to spiritual, and not to material sacrifices; the consecration was given to the living stones of the spiritual house, not to the gross and lifeless stones or timber, of which the upper room at Jerusalem, or the place of assembly in the house of Cornelius, was constructed. The radiance indicative of divine favour, was not, as of old, spread in one unbroken cloud of glory through the whole extent of the building; but it was divided into as many parts as there were living worshippers present; and it rested in the form of cloven tongues, like as of fire, upon the head of each of them. And when they went forth to extend the boundaries of the church, elements of consecration for buildings they carried none; but they carried, what was infinitely more valuable and efficacious, the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, and the power to ut-

* Acts xi. 15.

ter the truth which sanctifies with their lips. Streams of celestial grace were poured through them as the channels, to refresh, and purify, and cheer the hearts of those whom they addressed. That was fulfilled in them which the Saviour had promised, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."*

This promise began to be fulfilled on the first day that the disciples received in copious blessings, the proof of the acceptance and efficacy of the work, which their ascended Priest had gone to discharge on their account. While those who were assembled in the upper room to wait for the blessing, in number about a hundred and twenty, received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit's grace; they became the channels, through which its more ordinary, but not less saving streams, flowed, to three thousand persons in one day. The whole company of the assembled disciples, male and female, young and old, were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. They all contributed in producing that impression upon the assembled multitude, which Peter was instrumental in advancing to its decisive result, when they

* John vii. 38, 39.

that gladly received his word were baptized ; “ and the same day,” as the fruit of the labours of the hundred and twenty, which would doubtless be continued through the day, as well as of the address which Peter delivered at nine in the morning, “ there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” So soon as the relation of the circumstances which were connected with the outpouring of the Spirit upon the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, had loosened the Jewish prejudices, by which till that period their movements had been fettered, the Apostles, and those who laboured with them, went forth freely to the Gentiles. But they went forth, not in the habiliments of priests, to discharge efficacious rites for their fellow-men ; but as preachers, to make known to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. They consecrated no edifices, for the performance of an imposing ritual ; for buildings of any kind, which could be exclusively appropriated to their use, they found none. They erected no altars ; for they had no pattern after which to fashion them. They encumbered themselves with no censers, with costly incense to burn in them ; for the ordinary raiment which would have been convenient for them, they did not always possess. It was not their implements of service, or rites of wondrous virtue, but “ their *sound*,” which “ went into all the earth, and their *words* unto the end of the world.” Beautiful, as they passed over the mountain barrier of one country after another, were their feet ; for they preached the

gospel of peace, and carried glad tidings of good things. Their theme, melodious to the ear of those who knew their state as sinners before God, was the sacrifice of the cross, and the work of the living Priest, who was within the veil. They declared him to be, what the prophets had predicted, a Priest upon his throne ; not only living to intercede for all those who come to God by him, but also reigning to enrich them, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places ; “ the Lord over all, and rich unto all, that called upon him.”

There was royalty associated with the priesthood, which had presented the most perfect prefiguration of that which Christ discharges,—the priesthood of Melchisedec. His name is, by interpretation, King of Righteousness ; and he was also King of Salem, that is, King of Peace. The first title was doubtless given to him, to designate the unbending integrity, the unblemished sanctity, of his personal character ; while the latter seems to indicate, that these qualities, by the veneration which they inspired, were the shield of the city in which he officiated and reigned, rendering it sacred ground, which no warlike foot might presume to tread. While, therefore, all was commotion and turbulence around ;—while the kings of the neighbouring cities were forming their confederacies ; leading their subjects to the shock of the embattled field ; by turns, inflicting or suffering all the horrors of war, in scenes of carnage, pillage, and desolation, Salem was neutral and hallowed ground ;—as its name indicated, it was *peace*.

In more respects than one did Melchisedec prefigure Christ. He did so in the personal qualities by which he was distinguished; in the combined offices of priest and king, which he discharged; and in the influence, arising from his character and work, which he diffused.

That perfect righteousness was found in the Redeemer, his very enemies were compelled tacitly to acknowledge. When he put the question to them, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" there was none to answer. Pilate, though he condemned him to die, publicly declared, "I find no fault in him." The centurion who commanded the Roman guard which attended his crucifixion, was constrained to exclaim, "Certainly this was a righteous man."

That with the office of priest, he combined that of king, Pilate gave unintentional, but decisive testimony, when he wrote the superscription for the cross, on which, as Priest, he offered his spotless sacrifice, "This is the King of the Jews." That the Jews who had rejected him, and clamorously demanded his crucifixion, had some fearful intimations of his true character in their guilty consciences, appeared from their uneasiness, when their eye first saw the superscription upon his cross. It was like the sun-beam, darting unexpectedly into the gloomy region in which guilty purposes have been matured; and at which the children of darkness tremble, in fearful anticipation that their deeds will be exposed. The triumph of their malign-

nant joy was in a moment exchanged for foreboding fears, as to the import of the title which they read ; and hence their anxiety to have other words, which would by implication declare him to be an impostor, and throw the semblance of justice over their proceedings against him, placed in their stead. That God intended, that in the lowest state of his Son's humiliation, the combined offices which he sustained should be proclaimed, and declared to be immutable, appears from the answer which Pilate (whose mind was doubtless supernaturally controlled on the occasion) gave to their entreaties, "What I have written I have written." And so it was seen on the cross, as well as subsequently within the vail ; it was read on earth, as well as published in heaven ; it was unalterably inscribed by the power of imperial Rome, as well as sworn by the ever-living God, that he was constituted "a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec."

Coeval with the commencement of his priestly work, and the dawn of his regal glory, was the peaceful influence which he diffused. Pilate and Herod, previously at enmity, were that day made friends. The wall of partition, which had divided Jews and Gentiles in inveterate hostility, was that day broken down. He was their peace, who made both one, and reconciled them both in one body to God by his cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And when, having entered within the vail, on the full discharge of his work, he came in the power of his Spirit to bless his

waiting disciples, it was to produce in their hearts the peace which passeth all understanding; and to employ them in extending among their fellow-men his kingdom, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost. That kingdom, in its internal power, has been perpetuated in the world unto the present day. To all who have received him as their Priest, who have relied upon him, and presented their supplications through him; he has been their peace, reconciling them to God, tranquillizing their consciences by the sprinkling of his blood, and soothing their hearts by the exceeding great and precious promises of his word. If around them at any time all has been confusion and conflict; still there has been rest and quietness within. In the world they may have found tribulation; but in him they have enjoyed peace.

And the period is approaching, when his peaceful kingdom shall be visibly and universally established. The charm of his revered and hallowed name—the name which is above every name, shall be felt wherever it is proclaimed; and be proclaimed, wherever there is a human ear to listen, and a human heart to feel. Through the medium of his atonement and intercession, all tribes and families of the earth shall present their supplications and thanksgivings unto God, and blessings in return shall freely and widely flow. The plagues, which have hitherto desolated the world, shall be averted; the earth shall yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us. The his-

tory of the commotions among the nations, and the sanguinary conflicts of the human race, shall be closed by the coming of the great Melchisedec, in the power of his kingdom, to proclaim an universal peace, and make the world as tranquil as Salem was of old.— Men “shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”* “All kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall serve him.”† “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever.”‡ “With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth : and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid : and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed ; their young ones shall lie down together : and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’

* Isa. ii. 4. † Ps. lxxii. 11. ‡ Isa. ix. 7.

den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”* “In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.”†

Who can read these animating predictions, and connect them with the work of the High Priest of our profession, without feeling a new spring-tide of hope, in reference to the world, setting in upon his soul; without looking round upon it with an eye of deepening interest, and a heart of largest expectation; without being induced to address it in the language of inspiration! “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein: let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.”‡

* Isa. xi. 4—9.

† Ps. lxxii. 7.

‡ Ps. xcvi. 4—9.

SECTION IV.

THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD SUPERSEDES THE NECESSITY OF SACRAMENTAL EFFICACY.

AT this stage of our progress, we are able to present more clearly to the view than we previously could, the nature and design of the ritual observances of the Christian church; and to show, that as in Christ's sacrifice there is infinite efficacy, which we may receive by faith, without the intervention of a priest to recommend us to him, and convey virtue to us from him, of sacramental efficacy we have no need. By disconnecting baptism and the supper of the Lord from the work of a priesthood; and by showing that the latter was committed to the church to celebrate, rather than to its pastors to administer, we have already shaken the foundations on which the doctrine of sacramental efficacy rested. As we consider the doctrine to be unscriptural, and part of the structure of an antichristian priesthood, which yet remains as a stumbling-block in the path of many members of Protestant communions, we shall endeavour to remove it entirely out of their way.

We seriously object, *in limine*, to the term sacra-

ment. It is of pagan origin,* and conveys an idea altogether foreign to the design of either part of the

* “ The word *sacramentum* properly means the *military* oath, which every Roman soldier was obliged to take, of fidelity, and obedience to his general.”—*Dr. A. Clarke on the Eucharist.*

The Doctor gives in his work, in a quotation from Polybius, the matter and form of the oath.

“ When, in embodying and enrolling the troops, all the proper arrangements were made, and the different companies formed ; a *chiliarch*, or *military tribune*, selecting a proper person from all the rest, propounded the *sacramentum*, or oath of fidelity and obedience ; who immediately SWORE, SUBMISSIVELY TO OBEY, AND PERFORM WHATSOEVER IS COMMANDED BY THE OFFICERS, ACCORDING TO THE UTMOST OF HIS POWER. The rest, all coming forward, one by one, take successively the same oath ; that they would perform every thing, according to what the first had sworn.”

Now, if we refer to the institution of the supper, we shall find, that instead of there being a swearing in of the disciples, a *sacramentum* propounded to them on the occasion, there was a prophetic declaration, that they would all, on that very night, desert their Master ; and a considerate excusing of the individual, who was ready to give an *unrequired* oath of fidelity. How frequently may the disquisitions of literary men, on scriptural subjects, be in a moment exploded, by a simple statement of *plain matter of fact*. This simple matter of fact, too, goes far towards

ritual of the Christian church. Its use has engrafted superstition and bondage on the stock of Christian simplicity and privilege. Obligation under the bondage of an oath, is the idea which it originally expressed, and which its use still conveys. Hence the phrases, baptismal vow, and sacramental vow ;*—

exploding the whole theory of sacramental efficacy. If the ritual institutions of the Christian church had been intended to convey saving efficacy, surely when administered by the Saviour's own hand, their work must have been complete and perfect. His own hand gives the disciples the bread and the wine ; his own lips the words of institution. But then, instead of telling them of any efficacy which he had conveyed, any transformation which he had effected, his next words after they had communicated, were, " All ye shall be offended because of me this night ; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."

* These phrases were never employed by the writers of the New Testament, and were they to revisit the church, would certainly require to be explained to them. And yet, perhaps, scarcely any two, of those who have become learned on Christian subjects, beyond what the Apostles have written, would agree in their interpretation. Reason and sound sense dictated the question which Henry the Eighth wrote, in the margin of one of the papers which contained the discussions of the divines of his day, on the nature of the sacraments, and in which they admit, that,

vows that, in the sense in which they are understood, are rarely if ever perfectly kept; and consequently, agitation and alarm, instead of peace and joy in believing, characterise the services of many, when they approach what they are unwisely and unscripturally taught to consider the deeply mysterious rites of the Christian church. Now, by recurring to the analogy, which we have already described as existing between circumcision and baptism, the Passover and the Lord's supper, we shall be able to clear away the mists by which these institutions of Christianity have been encompassed; in which their own lovely features have been shrouded, and all kinds of fearful distortions have been made to arise, before the eye of the simple and the timid, in the fold of Christ. They have been associated with the gloom of the grove, and the terrific mysteries of the Eleusinian cave; let us contemplate them in their native light and beauty, as they may be seen in the temple of truth.

When circumcision was performed among the Jews, no vow was connected with any part of the ceremony; no intimation was given, that there was any thing mysterious in its operation, any invisible stream of grace communicated in its observance. The plain matter of

“In the Scripture, no perfect definition of the sacraments is to be found.” “Why then shoulde we cal them soo?” —*Vide* an amusing as well as instructive note in Orme on the Lord's Supper, p. 81.

fact, which every Jew well understood, was this ; that there was no access for his child to the institutions of worship, no right to enroll him among the privileged descendants of Abraham, if he were not circumcised. To Abraham himself, the rite certainly conveyed no saving efficacy. It is declared by the Apostle Paul, to have been to him, “ a seal,”—that is, a divinely appointed visible authentication stamped upon the flesh,—“ of the righteousness of the faith, which *he had yet being uncircumcized.*”* It could not be the same thing to his descendants, on whom the rite was to be performed at an age at which they were not competent to the exercise of faith. To them, it was merely the authoritative sign, or seal, stamped on their flesh, of their connexion with Abraham, as heirs of the promises, which had been made to him. A lineal descendant of Abraham had no title to a share in the promises, if the rite had not been performed ; while others, who could not trace their descent from him, might, by submitting to the rite, become incorporated with his family, and participate in its privileges. The law delivered at its institution, was, “ The uncircumcised man-child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people ; he hath broken my covenant.”† If it be said, The covenant involved a vow ; it may be answered, The vow was then performed, when the rite was discharg-

* Rom. iv. 11.

† Gen. xvii. 14.

ed. "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man-child among you shall be circumcised."* So far as this institution was concerned, the part of the covenant which was obligatory on the people was performed, when the rite had been discharged.

The question then arises, What advantages were connected with circumcision? It may be answered, by saying, that the child which was circumcised, was initiated into privilege, and promises;—the privilege, of attending the institutions of worship; the right to plead the promises, which were made to Abraham, and subsequently, as in succession they were delivered, those which were given to his descendants;—the promises generally of the Old Testament. The rite of circumcision, was a bloody rite; corresponding with the nature of the institutions to which it gave access, and with the event by which the types and promises of the Old Testament were to be fulfilled,—the shedding of the expiatory blood of the predicted Messiah.

In the same manner, is baptism, an initiation into privilege, and promises; the privilege, of Christian instruction and worship; the right to plead the promises of the New Testament, which are to us and to our children, and are all yea, and amen, in him into whose name we are baptized. The rite of baptism, is the aspersion of water, the element of refreshment

* Gen. xvii. 10.

and purification, emblematic of the effect of Christian nurture upon the mind, and of the Holy Spirit's influence, by whose agency the blessings promised in the gospel, are conveyed into the soul. No vow in its administration is enjoined ; no mystery in its operation is supposed ; no invisible stream of grace does it involve ; no incomprehensible mysticism about the mode in which it works, need here perplex the mind. The parents, who intelligently present their children for baptism, are those who value the institutions of Christian worship, and the blessings which are offered in Christ's promises themselves, and consider them the richest inheritance into which their children can be brought :—the minister who properly performs the rite, will enforce upon the parents the duty of bringing up their children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord, and present the different motives, which should produce its diligent and cheerful discharge :—and the children, so soon as the promises of Christianity can be unfolded to their opening powers, should be encouraged and exhorted to plead them, on the ground of the right to them, which in baptism was conferred. The seal, by which their connexion with the most gracious dispensation of religion which God ever established in the world was authenticated, though it has not, as in the case of the Jew, left an indelible stamp in the flesh, has yet been visibly placed upon them. The remembrance of its application, with the hallowed desires and expectations which were excited at the

time, and have become associated with the review of the service, should strengthen the faith, and increase the fervour of the parents, in their frequent and persevering prayers for their children; and the knowledge of its application, should inspire those who have been the recipients of the rite with boldness, when they come for spiritual influences and blessings to him into whose religion they have been initiated, and whose name they consequently bear. Of his multiplying descendants on earth, Abraham, in the mansions of repose and blessedness, was ignorant, nor could Israel acknowledge and help them; but Christ lives to receive all who come to him, and liberally to dispense his Spirit's grace unto them.

Be it however carefully observed, that there is a distinction to be made, between the *possession* of a right to plead the promises of God, and the *exercise* of that right, in the workings of a devotional spirit, by which the blessings which are promised are brought into actual enjoyment. Esau despised, and at length sold, his birthright. Many of the Jews undervalued, and irrecoverably forfeited, their covenant right. They were the descendants of Abraham after the flesh, and were enrolled, in virtue of having received the initiatory rite, among the Israelites to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; but because they did not value, they did not plead; and because they did not plead, they did

not inherit, the promises, by faith in which Abraham obtained his righteousness in this world, and a portion in the better, even the heavenly country. All were not Israel, who were of Israel. "He" (says Paul) "is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."*

So all are not Christians, who wear the name only. To us pertain an adoption more exalted; a glory more unfading; a covenant more gracious; a contrast to the law, in the ministry of reconciliation; a service more luminous and spiritual; and promises more exceeding great and precious; yet, to the value of Christian promises and privileges, multitudes who bear the Christian name are insensible, and while they have the form of godliness, deny its power. He then is not a Christian, who is one outwardly, neither is that a sufficient baptism, which is outward on the flesh; but he is a Christian, who is one inwardly, and the baptism which makes us children of God, is inward in the Spirit;—the power of the Holy Ghost, cleansing the soul from its defilement by the application of atoning blood, and renewing it in holiness, after the image of God. The minister of the gospel, may baptize with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son,

* Rom. ii. 28, 29.

and of the Holy Ghost ; but it is Christ's own prerogative, which he exercises in answer to the prayer of those who call upon him, to baptize with the Holy Ghost into his death ; that being buried with him by baptism into death, we may also, like him, be raised up from the dead, to walk in newness of life. In the case of an adult, just brought to an acquaintance with the Christian dispensation, awakened to a sense of his guilt, exercising repentance towards God, and calling on the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon and grace, if baptism, according to the apostolic practice, be immediately administered, the outward rite, and the inward grace, may in their communication be coincident in time. He may embody in his experience, that which was contemplated by our Redeemer in his conversation with Nicodemus ; be born at once of water, and the Spirit, and be qualified for immediate admission to the kingdom of God ;—the kingdom, which Christ came into the world to form and establish, and which on the first day when Peter opened it received three thousand such individuals, who were baptized with water, and at the same time received the gift of the Holy Ghost. That the former may be administered, where the latter is not communicated ; and that in the passages in which baptism is connected with the remission of sins, it is the circumstantial, and not the essential accompaniment, is obvious, from the case of Simon. He had been baptized, but was subsequently told, that his heart was “not right in the sight of God,”

and exhorted to repent, and pray to God, if perhaps he might *then* be forgiven.* Let this be kept in view, and it will be seen, that in the following passages, remission is essentially connected with repentance, and calling upon the Lord Jesus, and but circumstantially with baptism. Then said Peter unto them, “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.*”† “*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.*”‡ In confirmation of this view of these passages, it may further be observed, that while in instances without number, repentance, and a devotional application to Christ, which is faith, are stated to be essential requisites to the enjoyment of pardon, without the slightest allusion to baptism; baptism is, in no one instance, presented to our view, unconnected with repentance or faith, as the channel through which pardon flows. If then, the doctrine of baptismal efficacy rests for its support on these passages which we have quoted, it must fall to the ground; because, in each of these passages there is associated with it, that which is repeatedly stated to be essential to remission, without the slightest reference to baptism; and because, in the case of Simon, pardon did not accompany baptism, and he being baptized, was declared to be in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of

* Acts viii, 21—23.

† Acts ii, 38.

‡ Acts xxii, 16.

iniquity, and exhorted to seek forgiveness, by repentance, and prayer to God.

The same principle applies to the form in which Mark gives the apostolic commission. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved." And then, to mark faith as the essential, and baptism only as the circumstantial, it is added, "but he that *believeth not* shall be damned."* The omission of baptism in the repeating, which is usually the emphatic, and confirmatory clause of the proposition, deserves particular notice; and may be considered as an inspired intimation, not only that ritual observances are never to be ranked in importance with vital and essential principles; but also, that there may be cases in which the entire omission of the former, may not endanger an individual's safety. There cannot be deliverance from condemnation without faith, there may be without baptism.

We cannot clear all the points which are presented in this question, without noticing more distinctly, the pretensions which are made to regenerate infants by baptism. That the "washing of regeneration," referred to in the epistle to Titus, is not the baptism with water at any age of the recipient, and that it does not involve the remotest allusion to the baptism of infants, a quotation of the whole passage in which it stands,

* Mark xvi. 15, 16.

will be itself sufficient to demonstrate. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."* If we obey the apostolic precept, "In malice be ye children, but in understanding be men," we shall never confound, that which the living God sheds on us through Jesus Christ his Son, with that which the hand of feeble, mortal, sinful man administers to us from the cold and lifeless font; much less, shall we associate with the baptism of unconscious, guileless infants, terms which are employed to describe the grace which was conferred on those, who had been living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. If the passage which was delivered in the conversation with Nicodemus, contemplates the case of adults only;—and that it cannot refer to infants is obvious from the fact, that none but those who are arrived at years of understanding can become the subjects of that kingdom, which consists in the active intelligent principles of righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost;—

* Titus iii, 3—6.

then, the pretensions to regenerate infants by baptism have nothing left to support them; and pass away with the mass of darkening shadows, which, through ages of superstition and folly, have been accumulated round the simple lucid institutions of the New Testament. Should it be asked, Do you then leave the souls of those who were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, but who die in infancy, unredeemed, to suffer the consequences of original guilt? We answer: The main position which we are endeavouring to establish in our work, is this, That the blessings of redemption are not made to depend for their application on the interposition and work of an earthly priesthood; but are communicated directly to the soul by Him, who once died for us upon the cross, but now lives for us in heaven; our only, but all-sufficient Priest. More safely may the souls of those who die in infancy be entrusted to him, and to his work, than they can be to the work of those, who may not be at hand in the time of feeble nature's extremity; and who if they are sent for, may not arrive until the new-fledged spirit has disencumbered itself from its mortal fetters, and has soared to develope its powers, and perform its blissful service in the kingdom of the Redeemer's glory. In the period of his humiliation, he took little children *which had not been baptized* into his arms, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them; and on that and other occasions declared, that only those who were brought to a corresponding state of docility of

mind, susceptibility of impression, and absence of malice and wrath, could enter into the kingdom of God. Whom he received on earth, he will not reject in heaven. Whatever their connexion with the first Adam, who fell and entailed defilement, guilt, and death, on his posterity, may expose them to in a future state of existence ; He, the second Adam, the gracious head and brother of our race, will remove by the abundant efficacy of his mediatorial work ; he will receive them as the joyful heirs of a celestial inheritance ; will joy in them as the reward of his sufferings ; as a precious part of the innumerable progeny, brought into immortal life and blessedness, by the travail of his soul.

We have found in a quotation from the Apostle Paul, a distinction made between the circumcision which was outward in the flesh, and that which was inward in the heart : we have also noticed evident indications of a corresponding distinction in the case of baptism, the visible application of water by the hand of man, and the invisible communication of the Holy Spirit's grace, from the hand of the exalted Redeemer, The passage in which this distinction is most specifically made, and by which this part of our subject is brought into close connexion with the work of our atoning and interceding Priest, has yet to be adduced. The waters of the deluge once saved the feeble remnant of the righteous, sweeping away in their flood the hosts of the ungodly, by which they were encompass-

ed, and raising them to a new life of security, and separation from the wicked, in the ark into which they had retired. "The like figure," (says Peter,) "whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, *not* the putting away of the filth of the flesh," (that is, the outward affusion of water upon the flesh,) "but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God."* The nature of that answer, and consequently of the baptism to which Peter refers, Paul illustrates, when surveying the marshalled legions of the Christian's foes, he defies the power of the whole, and triumphantly declares the ground on which security is enjoyed: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."† The heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, that is, a conscience uneasy and disturbed by a sense of its guilt before God, by the application of the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. The answer of such a conscience is: I am safe, not because I have kept my baptismal vow, (for that no individual, who, either by his own lips, or by the lips of others appointed for him, has come under the obligation of a vow, has ever perfectly

* 1 Pet. iii. 21, 22.

† Rom. viii. 33, 34.

performed,) but I am safe, because Jesus died for my sins, and rose again for my justification ; because I have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope which is set before me in the gospel ; because I am baptized by the power of his Spirit, applying to my conscience the blood which cleanseth from all sin.

This is the baptism, which, like the circumcision of the heart, rises so far in importance above ritual observances, that they may not with propriety be compared with it. Of the baptism which is administered by the hand of man, when compared with this, we may say, as the Apostle did of circumcision, *Neither is that baptism*, which is outward on the flesh. Whatever instruction and encouragement may be afforded by its administration, it has in it no inherent efficacy ; it conveys no grace, it is not essential to salvation.—The things which accompany salvation, work “that one and the selfsame Spirit.” “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”* And this passage clearly and closely connects the subject with the interesting summary of essentials, which is given in another Epistle written by the same Apostle ; redeeming it from hands employed in ceremonies of human invention, by which it has been confused, perverted, and debased, and presenting it in harmony with the vital

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

principles of the gospel, which it has been our endeavour to unfold and establish. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, *one baptism*," (by the one Spirit into the one body,) "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

As circumcision involved no vow, so neither did the passover. It was a joyful feast, though blended by the infusion of bitter herbs, with the remembrance of bitter sorrows, which were past. It was instituted at the deliverance of the tribes from the bondage of Egypt, and its observance was enjoined through all their generations, that there might be an annual commemoration of their deliverance; and an interesting, popular, and impressive recognition of the fact, that they were all brethren, descended from one common stock, sharing in one common lot of national affliction, deliverance, or prosperity; participating by one common right, in all the national advantages of the religious institutions which God had established amongst them. It was kept by the whole of the people at the same time, and at the same place. On one evening a lamb bled for each of the many households which were assembled to partake of the feast. Whatever distinctions at other times prevailed between the members of the respective households, they were on this occasion laid aside, and all partook of the same lamb,

* Eph. iv. 4—6.

and from the same table ; and in the rites and provision of the feast, one household was the same as another household, from the dwelling of the humblest to the palace of the sovereign. It was God's own institution, and the impress of his wisdom is upon it. It annually bound together, in one communion of popular and joyful feeling, all the ranks, and all the members of the community, without destroying the distinctions which are necessary to the welfare, and essential to the existence of society. It was an antidote against the evils which grow out of distinctions in rank, and which are as injurious to the individuals themselves, in whose character they are found, as they are to the general peace and enjoyment of the community ;—high-minded domination in the ascending—abject servility in the descending scale. The former was kept in check by the annual recurrence to the bondage of Egypt, blended with the rites of an equalizing religious service. The latter was prevented, by the possession of inalienable religious privileges, in the celebration of which the whole nation became as one family ; and every member, however inferior his ordinary situations, took his place at the table, not by favour or courtesy, but by admitted and established right. This annual equalization was effected, without mortification to the rich, or the ebullition of democratic feelings in the poor. The charm of a religious solemnity suspended the working of every unworthy secular feeling, and combined the one family of the nation, in the

retrospect of its origin, the commemoration of its common deliverance, the reciprocation of fraternal sympathies, the uniform utterance of its thanksgivings and joys.

And the supper of the Lord is, in express allusion to the Passover, called by the Apostle a feast. "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."* It is a feast, established to commemorate our deliverance, by the death of Christ, from the bondage of sin, and exposure to wrath. Though it is attended with the bitter remembrance of our own past transgressions, and pensive associations, with the scene of Gethsemane and Calvary, yet is it a joyful feast. In its celebration, Christ, in the efficacy of his atonement, and the riches of his grace, is present to the mind, and dwells in the heart. The bread which is eaten is the visible emblem of the body which was wounded and broken for our transgressions. The wine which is drunk is the visible emblem of the blood which was shed for the remission of our sins. Faith appropriates the virtue of the invisible realities, while the eye, the hand, and the lips, are employed by the significant emblems; and the soul is refreshed, invigorated, and made joyful in the Lord.

* 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

It is also a feast of communion, in which the members of Christ's family recognize their relation to each other, and their common relation to him. Both the joy and the unity of the feast are referred to by the Apostle, when, addressing the members of the Corinthian church, he says, "The cup of *blessing* which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."* All partaking of Christ, they all unite in him. The bond which unites to the Head, unites also to the members. All other distinctions, natural, intellectual, civil, political, national,—yield before the equalizing, yet ennobling,—the separating, yet attractive and combining designation, *disciple of Christ*. There is no longer Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ to each one is all and in all; and they all are one in him. At the supper of the Lord, when it is properly observed, this union is visibly represented. It is his feast, and it is spread for all those who constitute, by virtue of their union to him whom the Father has appointed the head of the family, "the household of God." In its celebration, they blend into one mass, all earthly distinctions suspended and forgotten at the table round which they sit, and from which they equally partake.

* 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

The members of the Corinthian church perverted the supper in both parts of its design. They made it a social and convivial, rather than a spiritual feast ; and therefore it was necessary that they should be reminded of the original words of the institution. They partook of it in parties, one before another, and one consuming that which should have been equally divided between others. Thus they ate and drank unworthily, not discerning in the elements of the supper the emblems of the Lord's body ; nor recognizing and representing, in the mode of their communion, the fact,—that in the merit derived from the offering of that body, they all equally, and at the same time, participated. On account of these corruptions which the Apostle reprovèd, God also was displeasèd ; and in proof of his displeasure, he made the food of which they thus irreligiously partook, like the quails on which the Israelites fed in the wilderness, produce disease, instead of yielding nutriment. “For *this cause*,” the Apostle tells them, “many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”*

The statements which we have made, relative both to the design of the Lord's supper, and to the popular mode of its celebration in the first Christian churches, receive strong confirmation from the nature of the corruptions which the Apostle reprovès, as existing in the mode of its observance in the Corinthian church.

* 1 Cor. xi. 30.

The corruptions were of that kind, which could easily have been engrafted on the popular celebration of a spiritual feast, into the arrangements of which, the elements of corporeal refreshment, as the symbols of mental enjoyment, were introduced; but which it would have been impossible so speedily to have connected with the official administration of that, which on its institution, still recent, could have been represented as involving a deeply reverential mystery, and the impressive sanctions of a religious vow. It will be remembered, that in planting the church at Corinth, the Apostle's personal labours had been employed for nearly two years. In reference to the institution of the supper, he tells them, that he had delivered to them that which he had "received of the Lord;"* and by immediately adding the words, which the Redeemer employed in appointing the ritual commemoration of his death, but on which occasion Paul himself had not been present, he clearly intimated, that all the particulars which had been connected with that appointment, had been communicated to him by special revelation. During the protracted period of his personal ministry at Corinth, the supper would in all probability, as appears to have been the case at Troas, be observed weekly; and certainly, whenever observed under the Apostle's own eye, it would be in its original purity. Some time after Paul had left Co-

* 1 Cor. xi. 23.

rinth, Apollos followed, to water what he had planted. Acquainted, as Apollos must have been, with the mode in which the supper was celebrated in other churches, which the Apostles had formed, it is not probable that any abuses in its observance would have been allowed in the church at Corinth, while its members enjoyed his ministrations. And yet, in about three years after he himself had left their city, and in less than two years after Apollos had departed, Paul writes his first Epistle to the Corinthians, in which, reproving them, he says, "in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken."* Now, though, as the Apostle tells them, this was not in reality to eat the Lord's supper, yet it was what they had substituted for it, without being themselves alive to the fact, that they had essentially altered its character, subverted its design, and vitiated its observance. Could they have been insensible to the alteration which they had made in the institution, if on each successive Lord's day, of at least three years, in which it must have been observed in its purity, they had been accustomed to contemplate and receive it, as the deeply mysterious sacrifice of the altar; or even as the efficacious rite, which none but an Apostle, or one succeeding him in priest's orders, could administer to a kneeling recipient? There must have been enough of the original form and mode of observance remaining, to have rendered it in their estimation

* 1 Cor. xi. 21.

a continuance of what the Apostle had delivered to them, and for nearly two years had superintended amongst them ; but then, in the decline of their spirituality and brotherly love, they lost sight of the design of the institution, as well as admitted some culpable innovations in its form, which desecrated its whole character, brought the expressions of divine displeasure in supernatural diseases on some of the members of their communion, and stamped an indelible blot upon the page of their history. Let it be observed also, that no part of the reproof is particularly addressed to those who sustained office in the church, for allowing what, according to modern usages in the observance of this rite, must have been an invasion of their work, and a desecration of mysteries intrusted to their care. The guilt is charged upon those, whom we have represented as sustaining the responsibility in reference to the celebration of the Lord's supper—the members of the church, in their incorporated capacity ; and they had eaten and drunken unworthily, so as to bring the painful proof of condemnation on their practice, not because they had not reverently received the elements of the supper from the hand of a priest, but because they had not discerned in them the hallowed memorials of the Lord's body.

The same condemnation, and for the same cause, is not perhaps likely to be suffered again. There is indeed every reason to conclude that the case, in its guilt, and in the mode of punishing that guilt, was

peculiar to the members of the Corinthian church. We read of no other instance, in which the supper of the Lord was so deplorably perverted; nor, where the New Testament, the written and authoritative standard of Christianity, is possessed, containing the account of its original institution, with the record of this corruption and its consequences, is there any danger of a similar occurrence. So that the fears, which many, under a mistaken view of this passage,—the rendering of which in our authorized version is an unhappy exception to the skill usually displayed by its venerable translators,—have indulged; and by which they have been deterred from approaching the table of the Lord, or have been brought into a painful state of uneasiness and apprehension after they have participated, are altogether groundless; and the priestly power over the conscience, which has been fostered by it, is as destitute of any well-founded reality, as are the distorted figures of a disturbed and terrific dream. When the flock of Christ is universally fed, only with the sincere milk of the word, these dreams of terror will be unknown amongst them; they will see that the Saviour's ordinances do not symbolize with a military oath which leads to bondage, nor with mysteries which are observed with superstitious dread; but with joyous festivals, which commemorate deliverance from thralldom, and at which the household slave possesses a privileged equality with the master whom at other times he serves.

The Passover had a prospective, and anticipatory reference; as well as one which was retrospective, and commemorative. In common with every other sacrifice offered under the patriarchal or Jewish dispensations, the paschal lamb, first offered when the former was closing, and the latter was just about to be established, prefigured the suffering Messiah. In its subsequent offering through each successive year of the Jewish dispensation, it blended with the commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt, the anticipation of his coming in the flesh, who was to fulfil the promises which had been made to their fathers, and accomplish the predictions delivered by their prophets. The design of the Passover, in both points to which it directed, the past, as well as the future, has been completed; and, like the other rites and festivals of Judaism, it was virtually abrogated at that season of its celebration, when the Saviour, having first eaten of the paschal lamb with his disciples, appointed the bread and wine of the supper to succeed and supersede it; and then closed his own expiatory sufferings, which were to deliver from the bondage and condemnation of sin, by exclaiming, "It is finished!" and giving up the ghost. The festival, as it has been subsequently observed by the succeeding generations of the remnant of Abraham's natural descendants, has included neither authority, intelligence, nor joy. They have been unable to assemble for its celebration at the place which God commanded, and have had no

authority to keep it elsewhere. The commemoration of national deliverance, by the scattered and isolated fragments of a people which have had no political existence, but have depended on the disdainful sufferance of the nations among which they have wandered, has been an unmeaning, as well as an unauthorized rite. The promises, for the accomplishment of which, according to the interpretation they have given to them, they have been waiting in vain for eighteen centuries under reproach and oppression, associate with their festival the heart-sickening influence of hope deferred, and the desponding contrast between the deliverance once vouchsafed to the cries of their fathers, but denied, as though the ear heard them not, to the more painful cries and groans of successive generations of their sons. Still they cleave with pensive and mournful embrace to the shadow of the rite, notwithstanding the substance has so long, so completely, and for ever gone from their sight. Yet not so in the Christian view of the case. It is the shadow only which is gone, the substance remains;—remains in its two-fold reference, its retrospect to deliverance which has been wrought; its anticipation of glory, assured in promises and predictions, which is yet to come. “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death *till he come*:”* till he come;—to fulfil the most glorious predictions and

* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

promises which the New Testament contains;—to consummate all the arrangements of his providence, and the dispensations of his grace, from the beginning of the world to the end of time;—to confirm, in his judicial work, the truth of every declaration which the entire volume of his word includes;—to exhibit the aggregate result of the labours of his servants in all ages of the world, of the travail of his own soul, and of the important and extended engagements of his intercessory work;—to manifest the splendour of his own personal glory, and the completeness of the redeemed family of which he is the head, in their open acknowledgment before an assembled universe, as the sons of God.

Twice every day was the blessing pronounced in the Jewish temple on the people who there offered their worship, by the priests, who in succession carried the censer, and presented it on the altar of incense which was before the vail. There were, however, special occasions on which the blessing was pronounced with more than ordinary solemnity. On the day of annual atonement, when the High Priest himself officiated, and went within the vail to sprinkle the blood, and present the incense at the mercy-seat which was illumined by the visible glory of the divine presence, the multitude assembled on that occasion from all parts of the land, waited with deepest anxiety, and earnest expectation, for the proof of the acceptance of the work which the priest had gone out of their sight

to discharge, in his return, as the messenger of the Lord of hosts unto them. At length, when he had accomplished every part of the ritual which was connected with the putting away of sin, and in performing which he had worn the white linen vestments, which, because they were emblematic of purity, were called holy garments,—putting these off in the tabernacle, which no man but himself was allowed to enter while the atonement was being made—the priest arrayed himself in his splendid pontifical garments, and came forth to a people cleansed from their sins by the rites which he had discharged, to respond to the awakened emotions and excited expectations of their hearts, by pronouncing the appointed blessing upon them. So Christ, our Priest and sacrifice, having been once offered to bear the sin of many, and having subsequently gone within the vail to intercede for those who come to God by him,—“to them that look for him, shall he also appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.” While engaged in his work within the vail, he daily enriches with the blessings of his grace, those who present their constant services through him; but when he comes forth to perfect the salvation of his assembled people, cleansed entirely and for ever from their sins, it will be by enthroning them with himself in glory.

Including its prospective, as well as its retrospective reference, how many circumstances conspire to give interest to the celebration of the supper of the

Lord! The authority of the Redeemer's command;—the deeply interesting circumstances under which that command was given;—the review of sins which are past, and of the yoke of their bondage which is broken;—the remembrance of the curse which impended, and the contemplation of the sufferings by which that curse has been removed;—the possession of peace and pardon, hope and joy, all derived from the body and the blood, which by the simple elements of the supper are brought before the mind;—the reciprocation of fraternal sympathies, which, while they more immediately embrace the brotherhood assembled, extend in wider range to the whole family in earth and in heaven;—the showing forth to the world of Christ's death until he come, of the attraction which is felt in it, and the reliance which is placed upon it;—the looking for his second coming, without sin unto salvation;—the anticipation of being called to sit down with him to the marriage supper of the Lamb, when he will present the whole church unto himself, as a bride adorned for her husband, a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;—with the whole of these impressive transactions, which involve in them every event important and exciting to the soul in time or eternity, the supper of the Lord is intimately associated; and they combine to render its intelligent observance the most interesting, elevating, and joyful solemnity, which men were ever called to celebrate.

The direct line of argument, by which we have endeavoured to establish the proposition, that Christ is the only but all-sufficient Priest of the Christian church, has been the following: That the priesthood, which the prediction of David, and the writings of Paul, declared to have been the explicit type of the order of that which Christ sustains, was exclusive in its character; admitting neither associates, subordinates, nor transmission from hand to hand, but discharged by one individual, who was supreme and alone in all the functions and honours of the office. That though another priesthood, of a different order, had been subsequently officiating in its successive generations, by divine appointment, for fifteen centuries, yet the testimony which was given to the person and the mission of Christ, was amply sufficient to demonstrate him to be the priest after the order of Melchisedec, by whom the order of Aaron was to be superseded and abolished. That his call to the office, though after another order, was like that of Aaron, clearly given, and expressly recorded, with the accompanying declaration, that none could take the honour of the priesthood upon themselves, without a call equally definite and explicit. That as the race of Aaron is extinct, and no order of priests at present existing in the world can show a call from God to the office, corresponding with that which the race of Aaron possessed; it follows, not merely that Christ is the only Priest of the Christian church, but also, that he is the only Priest, offici-

ating for men by divine authority, in the universe of God.

We stated, that the fact of his sole appointment by the Father, necessarily involves the all-sufficiency of his work ; inasmuch as the honour of the divine perfections would be compromised, if the person appointed were not fully competent to the discharge of the whole work, which was committed exclusively to him ; but that the proof of the all-sufficiency of his priestly work admitted of interesting amplification, and lucid exhibition.—1. In the perfection of the atoning sacrifice which he offered ;—that sacrifice having been prefigured by the presentation on the Jewish altar, and for the whole of the people, of the one lamb every morning and every evening, called therefore the *continual* burnt-offering ; which type was embodied and superseded, when Christ was once offered as “ a lamb without blemish and without spot.” The continual burnt-offering derived whatever importance or virtue it possessed, from the purposed sacrifice of Christ, which it was appointed to typify ; and which including, in consequence of the union of Deity and humanity in his person, inherent and divine perfection, can admit of no limit to the power or range of its application ;—must by its once offering, for ever, exclusively, but efficaciously avail, to take away sin.—2. In the prevalence and perpetuity of the intercession, which he has gone within the vail to make, for those who come to God by him ; that intercession having been anticipated and

referred to in the declaration that the sacrifice which Noah offered had come up as a sweet smelling savour, and supplied a reason for making a covenant of peace with the earth, though man's continued guilt and renewed apostacy was foreseen; and having been prefigured by the censer of fragrant incense, which, as an associated part of the continual burnt offering, was presented morning and evening in the Jewish temple, at the time when the people, in every part of the land, were presenting their supplications to God. We quoted the description which John gave of the transactions of the celestial temple, as in vision they were presented to his eye; and which connects the work which was performed by the priest who burned the incense in the Jewish sanctuary, with the work which Christ discharges in heaven, to secure the acceptance of the prayers of all saints. We showed, that the prevalency of his work, as Intercessor, arises—from the perfect representation which he gives of our nature, in the spotless body that he offered up as our sacrifice; and in which, while the Father acknowledged him as his beloved Son, he declared himself to sustain towards us the relation of friend and brother;—from the omniscience of his eye, by which he is enabled distinctly to survey, fully to comprehend, and in one act of representation clearly to exhibit, the wants and circumstances of all those who come to God by him;—from the compassion of his heart, which, having experienced the deepest and most varied emotions of sorrow and

anguish, under diversified and accumulated sufferings, while he tabernacled in our world, is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and sympathizes in all the distresses which we are called to endure ;—and from the fullness and variety of the blessings which on his entering heaven in our nature he received, for the purpose of enriching his disciples, extending his kingdom, and bringing ultimately all the nations and families of the earth under his righteous, peaceful and beneficent sway.

Other points, subordinate to the principal argument, yet subservient to the general design of the work, and conclusive against the claims and ritual observances of those who have assumed to themselves the office in the church which belongs only to Christ, have also been developed. The Jewish hierarchy, according to the model of which, it has been assumed, that other hierarchies which exist in the Christian church have been formed, derived its splendour and power to interest and impress, not from the lengthened gradation of its orders, nor the extended ramifications of its members, spread through the country to discharge their official rites ; but from the concentration of its services into one place, and that place the special residence which God had chosen for the manifestation of his presence and glory ; while amongst its members, with the solitary exception of the high priest's successor, advancement to superior revenue or dignity was unknown. The whole hierarchy, in the succession of

its respective courses, served at but one altar of burnt-offering, and one altar of incense ; on the latter, but one censer at a time could be presented ; and that only at the hour of morning or evening sacrifice, when, on the former, the one lamb of the continual burnt-offering was consuming ; to represent the connexion between the altars, and the rites coincident in time, which were performed respectively upon them, the incense upon the one could be enkindled only by fire which was taken from the other. These rites having been abolished, for altar, censer, or incense, in the service of God elsewhere upon earth, authority there is none. The people could derive and enjoy the efficacy of the rites which the priests were discharging in the temple, when they presented their daily prayers at a distance from it, and without the material representation of any object which was employed in religious worship ; as well as when they were present three times in the year, at the place where the sacrifice was offered, and the priest with the smoking censer of incense went to present it before the veil : so that necessity for priest, or sacrifice, or any other material object present to the eye to assist the mind in the worship of God, cannot be shown to exist, until it can be demonstrated, that Christianity is more carnal in its ordinances than was Judaism itself. As the rites which were discharged in the Jewish temple, were types of what Christ in his priestly office perfectly performs ; so the place of service itself, was typical of

the true sanctuary in heaven, into which he has entered for us ; and nothing, corresponding either with the ritual, or the place of service, can again be established upon earth, without an invasion of Christ's office, and an intrusion on his work. When Nadab and Abihu kindled the incense in their censers with common and unauthorized fire, they were consumed ; when Korah and his company attempted to intrude into the sacerdotal office, which was committed exclusively to Aaron and his sons, they were destroyed ; and when the rulers of the Roman empire gave political establishment and endowment to those who had usurped the priestly office which Christ only is called to discharge ; he cast his disregarded censer upon the world, in which rulers and priests had conspired to desecrate his religion, by making it subservient to the mutual advancement of their worldly designs ; and woes, instead of blessings, followed the much lauded alliance between the mitre and the diadem, the *altar* and the throne. When the Christian church was opened, which is at length to receive into its bosom all the nations of the earth, they were persons and not places, which were consecrated by the fire descending from heaven ; they were the spiritual sacrifices presented by the tongue, which were authenticated as acceptable to God through Jesus Christ the only Priest, and not the sacrifice of the altar, ignorantly pretended to be by a mysterious transubstantiation, converted into the renewed oblation of the very body and blood of

Christ himself. The *one* baptism, which makes us members of Christ's body, and is, therefore, essential to salvation, is not the administration of water to the flesh, by the hand of man ; but the application of the blood of sprinkling to the conscience, by the power of the Holy Spirit, who then makes the body his temple, that he may purify it for God's service, while he raises the soul from glory to glory, in transforming it into the image of Christ. And when the Saviour established the ritual commemoration of his death, he gave it to his disciples in general, in their incorporate capacity, as churches, to observe ; that by its universal and popular celebration, they might, wherever but two or three of them should be found, show forth his death till he come. But if these considerations are not deemed sufficient to subvert the pretensions of an official priesthood, and with them, the foundations of the anti-christian system of the Romish church, every part of which is cemented together by the work of a priest, we think that others, still more conclusive, will arise out of the third, and compleatory part of our work.

THE BOOK OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

PART III.

PART III.

THE LEVITICAL TERMS EMPLOYED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, WHICH DO NOT APPLY EXCLUSIVELY TO CHRIST, BELONG EQUALLY TO ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS.

SECTION I.

THE DESIGNATION GIVEN BY PETER TO THE MEMBERS GENERALLY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, CORRESPONDS WITH THE DECLARATION OF MOSES TO THE JEWS, THAT THEY SHOULD BE A "KINGDOM OF PRIESTS."

THE passage of the New Testament, in which Levitical terms are most remarkably and decisively employed in reference to any other individual than Christ, is found in the First Epistle of Peter. It is Peter, whose pretended successors have contrived to exalt themselves to the throne, and to trample the people in the dust, who tells the strangers of the circumcision which were scattered abroad, what, as there is in the Christian church no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, applies equally to all; that Christ, not himself, is the rock

of the church, and they all, "as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."* And again: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."†

It will be remembered in illustration of Peter's meaning in these words, that a very similar declaration had been made to the Jewish people shortly after God had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt and had taken them under his own immediate guidance and care. "And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."‡

* 1 Pet. ii. 5. † 1 Pet. ii. 9, 10. ‡ Exod. xix. 3—6.

It will be obvious to every individual who compares these passages of Holy Scripture together, that they are parallel to each other. If Peter does not quote precisely the words which Moses was commissioned to employ to the Jewish people, the correspondence between the passages is yet so close, as to render it certain, that they were before his mind; and that he felt himself inspired to deliver a similar communication to the members of the Christian church. As an Apostle of Christ, however, he stood on more elevated ground than did Moses; his eye took a wider range; and his lips describe a dignity and privilege, corresponding with the superior spirituality, elevation, and glory of the Christian dispensation. But in this respect, that is first which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual. That also is more obvious which is natural, and its consideration will assist us in rising to that which is spiritual. The historical narratives, as well as the typical institutions of Judaism, may in this way be made subservient to our instruction. Through the interesting and attractive medium of facts which are clear to every eye, and level to every understanding; which in common with all other historical events appeal to the sympathies of our nature; and which have an additional charm derived from their marvellous, their supernatural, their miraculous character; we may be led into the easy apprehension of spiritual truth, and be enabled, as with a palpable grasp, to lay hold on Christian principle. Let us then go back to the words

which were delivered by Moses to the children of Israel, and show in what respects they were embodied in the facts of their history ; and then we shall find a solid basis on which to rest our interpretation of Peter, and on which to raise a superstructure harmonious in its proportions, and sufficiently capacious to include the whole Israel of God.

Be it premised, that in what was official in the priesthood, in what pertained to the ministry at the altar, to the offering of sacrifices for sin, to the sprinkling of blood, to the presentation of incense, there could be no participation on the part of the people. Out of these services, from the highest to the lowest, they were decisively, and perpetually excluded. When therefore, Uzziah, elated by the prosperity which had attended his protracted reign, resolved to try whether he might not associate the sacerdotal with the regal office ; and took a censer, and went into the temple to present it upon the altar of incense ; he was struck with a leprosy, which compelled him to hasten from the place into which he had intruded, and to dwell apart from the congregation, cut off from the house of the Lord, during the remainder of his life.

Now an enlightened individual, instead of desiring, like Uzziah, to participate with the priests in what was merely official, and for the discharge of which, in a lineal descendant of Aaron, the absence of corporeal defects was the only essential qualification, would rather, like David, have been anxious to participate

with them in what was intellectual, moral, and spiritual; in that which is the firm and undecaying basis of true elevation, the sweet fountain of perpetual enjoyment. Here the participation was thrown open to all, and he might rise the highest in dignity and blessedness, whose meditations were most constant in God's law, and whose obedience was most exemplary to its precepts. How far David had advanced may be learned from his own words, which were employed, not ostentatiously before his fellow-men, but devotionally and gratefully in the retirement of his closet before God. "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than my enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts."* We are prepared then, by this developement of David's experience, to understand, that in knowledge, and in separation to the service of God, by keeping his precepts, an individual, and if one individual any multitude of individuals possessing similar religious advantages, may become as a company,—as a kingdom of priests. Under these two aspects, this part of our general subject will, we trust, unfold itself clearly to the view,—will be seen to harmonize with the statements of the preceding parts, and will closely entwine itself with them, in the accordance and strength of a three-fold cord, not easily to be broken.

* Psalm cxix. 97—100.

SECTION II.

IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, WHICH IS THE BASIS OF ALL TRUE RELIGION, THE JEWISH PEOPLE, WHEN THEY WERE OBEDIENT, WERE A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, AND CHRISTIAN PEOPLE ARE A HOLY PRIESTHOOD.

It will be remembered, that at the period when God delivered the Jews from the bondage of Egypt, the knowledge of himself as the one living and true God, was nearly obliterated from the earth. How little men are to be trusted with the oral perpetuation of any thing which relates to God and his service, appears from the fact, that this first element of religious truth, though it was entitled, in antiquity and authority, to hold the highest place, having been communicated clear and full, from each successive fountain of human existence—Adam and Noah; though it was professed and taught, in their respective generations, by patriarchs of high renown; though it was declared from day to day by the heavenly bodies, in the regularity and harmony of their movements, and the unity of design apparent in the one great system which they compose; was yet,—by those who, in time and place, were contiguous to the patriarchs, who made the heav-

ens their study, and who boasted of their wisdom,— either altogether unknown, or, what is worse, practically denied, and systematically excluded from the attention of the people. To none more fully than to the Egyptians, amongst whom the arts and sciences were cradled, and, as recent investigations demonstrate, were reared nearer to maturity than had once been supposed, do the statements of the Apostle, when writing to the Romans, apply: “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.”*

That generation of the Israelites which God delivered from Egypt, carried with them, together with many of the vices which slavery generates, the infection of the idolatries by which, in the land of their bondage, they had been encompassed. This circumstance formed one reason why they were not immediately conducted by the direct and trodden route to the land of promise. It was necessary that they should be purified from the contagion of idolatry themselves, and be fully instructed in the knowledge of God, before they were led onward to dispossess the guilty nations

* Rom. i. 21—23.

which defiled the land, in which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had once built their altars to the Lord. In the process of purification, nearly the whole of those who had grown to maturity in Egypt passed away ; and it was the generation which had been trained in the wilderness, cut off from all other nations, whether barbarous or refined, enjoying the institutions of God's appointment, and beholding daily the displays of his power and goodness in their miraculous supply, which was made meet to enter the land which had been promised, and enjoy it as their settled possession. And if obedience to God is the best proof of being enlightened in the knowledge of him, they gave practical demonstration of their intelligence and illumination. "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel."* The period of the Jewish history which they filled up, is therefore subsequently referred to in language peculiarly bold and expressive : "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord ; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in the land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase."† The whole people, then, at this period, whether compared with the Egyptians whom they had

* Josh. xxiv. 31.

† Jer. ii. 2, 3.

left behind, or with the Canaanites whom they were about to dispossess, resembled, being enlightened in the knowledge of God, "a kingdom of priests."

And means were taken to perpetuate this national religious superiority ; to render the Jews, occupying, as they did, a central situation among the rising empires of the earth, the light of the world, the people enjoying, and diffusing around them, the knowledge of the true God. Oral communication had been corrupted. The stream of tradition, clear as crystal in its origin, had, by the successive influx of its channel of every species of earthly admixture, entirely lost its original character ; and as it rolled on through the regions of the earth increasing in population, instead of discharging its feculence, became the common receptacle of every thing which was impure. Science had lent its power to arrange and systematize the rude and shapeless materials of the popular idolatry ; to commend it to the patronage of sovereigns and statesmen ; to enthrone it in gorgeous temples ; to invest it with the mantle of venerable sages, the fascinations of genius, and the blandishments of sensual delight. What tradition had failed to preserve, and recreant science had proved itself rather unwilling and unable to restore, was now embodied in a written revelation, in pages which were invested with the attribute of immortality ; in oracles which might be disregarded, but which could never be bribed, nor corrupted, nor silenced. To the Jews were committed these oracles

of God ; and, at whatever period of their history they listened and were obedient to them, they became, in comparison with their neighbours around them, “a kingdom of priests.” They had amongst them the light which could never be totally extinguished, and which occasionally shone with a radiance which penetrated the surrounding regions of darkness, and produced the cheerful anticipation of the dawn of an universal day.

There were, however, two circumstances, each of which, in a different period of the Jewish history, circumscribed the advantages, which from the Scriptures might have been derived. Prior to the captivity in Babylon, by which the vice was effectually cured, it was the proneness of the people to adopt the idolatrous rites and customs of their neighbours, because of the indulgence which in them was afforded to the corrupt propensities of their nature. Subsequent to the captivity, and as a consequence of it, it was the corruption of their language which rendered the pure Hebrew of the sacred text obsolete, and to the mass of the people scarcely intelligible ; affording an opportunity for the introduction of false glosses and delusive traditions. Against these, the whole course of the Saviour’s personal ministry was directed ; and it was the obstinate adherence of the people, their teachers, and their rulers, to them, which induced them to unite in rejecting and crucifying their Prophet and King. Still, at this darkest period of their history, there were a few, who,

like Nathanael, were Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile; who saw in Christ, the Sun of Righteousness whose rising was foretold by Malachi; walked in the light which he diffused; and, knowing the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he had sent, wore more worthy the title of priests of the Lord, than were those who at that time officiated in the temple, which they had converted into a house of merchandize and a den of thieves.

Closely analogous to the circumstances of that generation, which was trained in the knowledge of God in the wilderness, were the circumstances of the first converts to the Christian faith. Christ, the true Passover, had been sacrificed for them. Deliverance from the condemnation and bondage of sin by his death, had been effected. A more enlarged and perfect revelation of the truth of God, than the world had ever before enjoyed, was vouchsafed. A new covenant, the substance of which was, "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people," was introduced. A new ministry, to gather the sheep into the fold, the ministry of reconciliation, was established. New shepherds to watch over them and feed them when gathered into the fold, pastors and teachers, were appointed. They were fed, not with traditions and foolish genealogies, and old wives' fables, but with the "sincere milk of the word." They were employed, not in repeating paternosters and avemarias,

and in counting by the beads of the rosary the number of their vain repetitions; but in spiritual exercises, which were refreshing and invigorating to the spirit, and which were worthy the character of those, who were renewed “after the image of God, in knowledge and true holiness.” Their knowledge was not to be stationary, confined within the narrow but perplexing labyrinths of creeds and acts of councils; but to be progressive, through all the length and breadth, and depth and height, in which the love of Christ and the range of his truth extended, and in which they were to increase, till they were filled with all the fulness of God. For their advance to higher degrees of spiritual intelligence, they were directed, not to the members of a hierarchy, by whom every thing has been fixed and settled according to their own inclinations, and for their own aggrandizement and despotic power over the conscience; but to God the Father of lights, who giveth wisdom liberally, to all who ask him, and upbraideth not. Even those of their teachers who were inspired, and invested with the highest authority in the church which ever was intrusted to men; disclaimed the desire to exercise dominion over their faith, but wished rather to be helpers of their joy. If, as good stewards of the mysteries of God, they unfolded those things which had been hidden from ages which were past, and which angels desired to look into; as men, who felt that the treasure was in earthen vessels, and that the excellency of the power which transferred it

to others was of God, and not of themselves, they bowed the knee daily before him, on behalf of those to whom they ministered, to entreat for them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Nor were their prayers presented in vain. The people received an unction from the Holy One, and knew all the truth as it is in Jesus. They were brought out of darkness into marvellous light. They became, in the possession and diffusion around them of the knowledge of God, an enlightened and holy priesthood. The church, at this period of its history, was the pillar and ground of truth; the basis, as broad as the boundaries which embraced the great mass of its members; the pillar, as firm as their united strength could make it. It was a pillar of light, from which was held forth to the world around, in living, lucid, radiant characters, "the word of life."

That it was not an empty compliment, an unmeaning epithet, which Peter applied to the church when he called its members a holy and a royal priesthood, and Paul, when he called it the pillar and ground of truth, is evident from the fact, that the members of the church at Jerusalem were associated with the elders and Apostles, in the council which was convened to determine the question which had arisen respecting circumcision. After there had been much disputing, Peter rose up and gave his decision upon the case. When he had concluded, then *all the multitude* kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Saul. And

after they had held their peace, James connects with the facts of the case, as they had been stated by his brethren who preceded him, the predictions which had been given before respecting them, and delivers the conclusion to which it behoved them to come. Then, all hearts and voices being united in one judgment, "it pleased the apostles and elders, with the *whole church*, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders *and brethren* send greeting unto the *brethren* which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia."*

The *manner* in which these letters were indited, has not been recorded without design. Inspired Apostles could associate themselves, in a solemn act of deliberation and legislation, with the brethren of the church. Those who presume that they possess much more authority than the Apostles can be shewn to have exercised; who can absolve from all sins; who can confer the Holy Ghost; who can decree rites and ceremonies, which, on peril of excommunication, the people are bound to receive, would, as may reasonably be supposed, deem it an affront offered to their dignity, to suggest the association with them, in their councils or convocations, of the brethren of the church;

* Acts xv. 22, 23.

—so much have the people subsequently sunk, or the teachers, *though uninspired*, subsequently risen.

It will be admitted, by all who understand the nature of the apostolic commission, that the Apostles themselves were fully competent to determine the question which was brought before the council, without the co-operation either of people or elders; that their decision would have been binding; and that it could, were any disposed to cavil or reject, have been decisively and effectually enforced. But then, actual strength and firmly-settled authority are usually blended with consideration, forbearance, condescension, indifference to form and punctilio, generous concession, liberal satisfaction and pleasure in the exercise of courtesy, the infusion of confidence, the reciprocation of regard. On the other hand, usurpation, especially ecclesiastical, is uniformly jealous of its dignity; carefully withdrawn from familiar intercourse with the people, and encompassed with mysterious forms, inspiring awe and humble deference; stern and prompt in its suppression of every effort of the free-born mind; lordly in its gait; distant and repulsive in its demeanour; and armed with fearful anathemas, and the power of direful excommunications, to punish the “wicked errors” of those who venture to impugn the foundation of its titles, decrees, or authority.

Had the spirit of the Apostles been uniformly breathed by those who have called themselves their successors, schism and dissent would have been things

of but rare occurrence in the church. But by how much legitimate authority has been wanting, by so much has the lording it over God's heritage increased and abounded. Indeed that which was known as the heritage, which constituted in apostolic times the church, is now scarcely recognized as forming a component part of it. The term has been diverted from its original application, and is most commonly employed in a sense in which it never occurs, to which it never approximates in the pages of the New Testament. It has at length, in general usage, come to stand, not for the people who were wont to compose the church, but for the hierarchy, which ministers and rules in it. So that to confide in the church, is to believe whatever the hierarchy has settled and determined to be orthodox and true ; to submit to the church, is to be obedient to what the hierarchy enjoins ; to be liberal to the church, is to increase the temporalities of the members of the hierarchy ; to be grateful for the advantages derived from the church, is to be thankful for the varied offices which the members of the hierarchy are appointed to perform. It never occurs to the people, in their simplicity, that if things were as they should be, and as, in apostolic times, they were wont to be, Christ, and not the church, would be the great object of faith and confidence ; the unfettered Scriptures, and not human creeds and decrees of councils, would be the authoritative guide and rule of faith ;—that, instead of a hierarchy towering in secular dignity

over them, there would be only pastors and teachers watching for their souls, as those who must give account of the charge which the great Shepherd has intrusted to them; and that they, submitting to all the ordinances of Christ, would be themselves the church; incorporated by voluntary and grateful obedience to the laws of Christ, not by constrained obedience to the civil, and, in religious affairs, unauthorized appointments of men. There has obviously been a two-fold ecclesiastical usurpation committed; an usurpation of the people's incorporated title, as well as of Christ's exclusive office; so that, strange to say, the members of the hierarchy are the priests and the church also!

The keys of Peter, under the skilful management of his successors, have been made to open every door, ancient or modern; royal, aristocratical, or plebeian; patriarchal or pagan; Jewish or Christian; within which any title, dignity, or treasure could be found;—and the spoils from every quarter, and from every age; all diverse, all prodigious things, have been brought together, as was meet, to be laid at the feet of him who is Christ's vicar upon earth. Could one of the ancient patriarchs revisit the world, he would find that the race to which he belonged is not yet extinct: and were he to inquire for the chief patriarch at present existing, he would be directed to his residence at Rome. Could Aaron arise from his grave on mount Hor, and undertake a pilgrimage to the same place, he would find that there is still a high priest, arrayed

in vestments more splendid than he ever wore ; and children owning him for their sire, more numerous than descended from his loins. Could Moses follow in the steps of his brother, he would find a legislator, claiming powers more extensive than he ever possessed ; and behold him assisted by his seventy elders, the cardinals, determining all questions which are too hard for ordinary judicatories to decide. Could the pagan Numa rise up from his urn, he would find his Pontifex Maximus still in office, and the college of subordinates still dependent upon him ; and were he to accompany them to the respective temples in which they officiate, and observe the numerous statues and altars, and smoking censers around ; he might bless himself, that, though names had altered, and temples and ceremonies a little increased, yet, that the substantial parts of the service were much the same as when he fell asleep in the city, which, by religious rites, he had attempted to refine ; and that he had been happy enough to establish a perpetual priesthood. And were any of the humble brethren of Judea, who were present at the council which was held to settle the question about circumcision, to come forth from their graves, and inquire for the church—the church, which could meet and deliberate, and send forth messengers and letters to the brethren in other cities, they also must go to Rome ; for no where else in the Romish communion could they find a church that can perform the functions which belonged to that with which they were

once connected. But there, although their knowledge of Peter had been intimate and familiar, they would seek admission to his successor, and to the deliberations of the church which is now under his exclusive care, altogether in vain.

It is a remarkable fact, in the history of the delusions of which the human mind may become the subject, that, just in proportion as ecclesiastical men have succeeded in subverting the constitution of the church, have they also succeeded in possessing the public mind with the idea, that what they designate their church, is purely apostolic in its substance and form. Those who eulogize the Church of England as being the only church purely apostolic in its constitution and character, and who can scarcely allow that safety or rational piety are to be found out of her pale, should be prepared, before they give those up to the uncovenanted mercies of God who separate from her communion, to shew us in what that which is the object of their glory and tower of their confidence and safety *substantially* consists. Were we to admit that our beloved sovereign has the same right to be head of the church as he has to be possessor of the throne; which we hesitate to allow, not because we yield to any of our fellow-subjects in loyalty to his person and government, but because we cannot, in religious obligations, give a divided allegiance between God and man: were we to admit that the orders of the clergy, in all their various degrees, are as unimpeachable as are the piety,

zeal, and learning of a considerable proportion of their number—and we wish we could say of the whole : were we to admit that the liturgy is not only scriptural and truly devotional in its general character, but also that it is so faultless, that no conscientious individual, however scrupulous, need falter at the solemn utterance, before God and his fellow-men, of a single word or syllable which it contains : were we to admit that the whole of the Thirty-nine Articles are as accordant with the oracles of truth as we allow the greater part of them to be : could we admit that the Canons breathe the mild and gentle spirit of the gospel, instead of the blind intolerance of antichristian Rome ; excommunicating, *ipso facto*, those who have light enough to see, and honesty enough to affirm, that “the Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments,” does contain *some* things which are repugnant to the Scriptures :* were we to admit all which the warmest advocate of the system could wish to advance in ref-

* “Whoever shall hereafter affirm, That the Form of God’s worship in the Church of England, established by law, and contained in the Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, is a corrupt, superstitious, or unlawful worship of God, *or containeth any thing in it that is repugnant to the Scriptures* ; let him be excommunicated, *ipso facto*, and not restored but by the Bishop of the place, or Archbishop, after his *repentance, and public revocation of such his wicked errors.*”—*Fourth Canon.*

erence to the head, the dignitaries, the subordinate ministers, and the formularies,—*still we have not yet come to the church.* At Jerusalem there were the apostles, and elders, *and the whole church.* Now the king is not the church, any more than the apostles were; nor the ministers, whatever be their numbers and orders, any more than the elders were; nor the formularies, for no mention is made of any as existing in the church at Jerusalem; and the question again returns, *Where is the church?* If it must be confessed, in opposition to the whole current of thought, and feeling, and language commonly employed upon the subject, that the church consists substantially of the people who unite in commemorating the death of the Lord at his table; then, a number of questions again arise. Have they, in any way, become actually incorporated? How do they receive those who from time to time are added to their number? What qualifications do they require in those who are admitted to their communion? What kind of pastoral inspection is exercised over them, or what discipline administered amongst them? When do they meet to deliberate;—to transact their affairs;—to send letters or messengers to the brethren of other places;—to choose deacons to distribute their bounty;—or to receive, if they must not choose, the ministers who may be provided for them? Now since few, if any, of these inquiries could receive a satisfactory answer, it might become a question demanding serious discussion, how

far there is, within the pale of the establishment, that which, in the scriptural acceptation of the term, is entitled to the designation of a Church. It is matter of notorious fact, that there has been no coming together of what, in common parlance, passes for the Church of England, for upwards of a century; that when its convocations were accustomed to be held, the brethren had no place nor voice in them; and that so far from the assembly having been more harmonious, dignified, and heavenly, because the unlearned laity were excluded, the dissensions were so protracted and unappeasable, that the then head of the church, despairing of being able to govern its superior members, adjourned their meeting, *sine die*; and suspended, if he did not virtually abolish, the constitution of the church, as *by law* established.

Those who expatiate so eloquently upon the guilt of schism, should place themselves occasionally at those points from which nonconformists are accustomed to contemplate the communion to which they belong; and either prove that it is substantially and truly apostolic in its constitution, or labour to make it so, before they censure and condemn others, who, enjoying the liberty which the members of the first churches practically claimed, tread in their steps, and combine, in voluntary union, to obey the laws, and enjoy the ordinances of Christ; cheerfully yielding to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, but to God only the things which are God's.

And then, if, with the New Testament in our hands, we go to Rome, and ask for the church; the existing representative of that to which Paul addressed the letter which stands first in order among the epistles, and which he entitled, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints;" we should inquire for such a church altogether in vain. We should find a head, sufficiently conspicuous and exalted; dignitaries and priests without number; rituals and vestments in abundance; but few, if any, would understand what we meant in asking for the brethren who, being incorporated, compose the substantial body of the church; and all who agree that such a body had not been seen there for many centuries.

Indeed, the brethren of the Romish communion, if they were recognized as forming a component part of the church, are too numerous, and too widely scattered, to come together into one place to deliberate; and if they could, they acknowledge no brethren of any other church, (as of Antioch,) to whom they could send their messengers or letters. Amongst the many improvements in ecclesiastical affairs, which have taken place since the unassuming inexperienced Apostles left the world, a much more masterly and expeditious mode of settling disputes than they ever ventured to adopt has been discovered; namely, to excommunicate and anathematize; to denounce the heretics, and doom them to an everlasting curse. So freely have the powers which have existed and been recog-

nized in the Romish communion employed these weapons, that she stands, isolated and alone, as an Ishmaelite, spurning all pretensions in others to be brethren; and then, to complete the mystery of her iniquity, she makes it her boast that salvation is not to be found beyond her pale.

And yet, this church, so exclusively and infallibly apostolic, that to question its pretensions exposes you to anathemas, and, when she possessed the power to inflict them, to what was much more serious, the terrors of the dungeon and the stake, has not one of the genuine elements of which the church in council at Jerusalem was composed. The pontiff, as his name indicates, is a semi-pagan intruder into the throne of Him, who is the only Head of the church; the priests of various degrees are intruders into the sacerdotal office of Him, who is the only Priest of the church; the brethren have no incorporated title, are not recognized as an essential part of the church; and the consequence is inevitable, that in the New Testament acceptance of the term, there is no church at all. Were the principle which is assumed by the Romanists true, that there is no salvation but in connexion with a truly apostolic church, it would be most fatal to every member of their own communion. Happily, as Christ, and not the church, is the object of faith: so union to Him, in whom there is the fulness of all perfection, and not to the church, of which every separate section is more or less imperfect, is the only thing essential to

salvation. “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”* “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”†

It may be questioned whether there are, or can be, in the present day, any churches formed precisely upon the model of those of which we read in the Acts, and to which the Epistles were addressed, for this reason,—that the supernatural endowments of various kinds, which were so liberally distributed amongst the members of those churches at their formation, and the exercise of which must have materially modified their constitution and government, are no longer possessed. The general acknowledgment, that no church is, or can be made, entirely apostolic in its character and form, will, perhaps, be the first step towards the universal exercise of an enlightened and expansive charity, and might lead the way, if not to a complete uniformity in modes of worship, and minor opinions, which the Apostles neither prescribed nor attempted to produce;‡ yet, to such an approximation in general principles, freedom of intercourse, interchange of communion, and reciprocation of regard, as shall demon-

* John v. 11, 12. † John iii. 35, 36. ‡ *Vide* Rom. xiv.

strate to the world, that the body is one, and animated by the same spirit, though its respective members have not all the same form and office ; that the garment of Christ, though light and shade diversify its hues, yet has neither rent nor seam, because they blend and intermingle with each other.

The only insuperable obstacle to such an approximation and union, are found in those communions, in which the most lofty and uncompromising pretensions to apostolic form and constitution, are made in words ; but, which, in facts, exhibit the farthest possible remove from the acknowledged model—the practical exclusion of the people of which the first churches were substantially composed, the virtual denial of the distinct and separate existence of the churches which the Apostle planted, and to which they wrote their epistles. If the church of Rome was from the beginning, or was intended afterwards to become, the universal church, it is certainly much to be regretted, that the Apostles were so unacquainted with the fact, as to write epistles to other churches, in which there is not even an allusion to her ; and that, in the epistle which was written to herself, she should receive no directions, but what supposed the perpetuation of her then restricted locality. One might almost imagine that the form and arrangement of the New Testament, as well as much of its matter and substance, were purposely adapted to subvert and expose the foreseen and predicted usurpations and pretensions of the rulers in

the Romish church. The books of the Old Testament recognize and address but one congregation, the congregation of Israel. Then the church was one, in the visible aggregation of its members who assembled three times in a year, in a popular and joyful community, at their one temple of worship. But the apostolic writings recognize and are addressed to various churches, existing in different places, independent of each other, but still popular in their constitution, the members of each respectively able to come together into one place, to listen to the epistles which were written to them, or to exercise the discipline which was required of them.*

In the subversion of the constitution of the Christian church, the same principles have operated which of old corrupted oral tradition, and then for a while made void the written revelation. Men are not to be trusted with the unchecked deposit, nor the *viva voce* perpetuation of any thing which is spiritual and divine. They ever have perverted, and (for human nature remains the same) ever will pervert, in such cases, that which has been given for the general benefit to their own particular or professional advantage. In the

* "I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." 1 Thess. v. 27.

"And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle of Laodicea." Col. iv. 16.

Christian church, the remedy for the evil is provided, in the preservation, by a watchful Providence, of the uncorrupted oracles of truth, and the application of that remedy is being made in their general circulation. We can come for God's truth to his own word. "He is not a man, that he should lie." Very unwise are those who trust in man, when God has so unequivocally declared his propensity to deceive, and universal history and experience so lamentably confirm the painful and humiliating fact. To the law and the testimony, must be our exclusive appeal; and whatever shrinks from the decision of this authoritative and infallible judge, betrays itself to be an usurpation, which sooner or later will be compelled to withdraw its head, branded alike with the marks of God's displeasure, and of man's reprobation.

The Bible is abroad, and is spreading through the world; and whatever imperfections necessarily inherent in the work of men, and most glaring in that of those who claim infallibility, may attend its transfusion into the various languages and dialects of mankind, these facts, which are fatal to the theories on which ecclesiastical usurpations have been constructed, cannot be concealed:—That the apostolic epistles were written to distinct and independent churches, substantially composed of Christian brethren;—that the council at Jerusalem consisted of the apostles, and elders, and the *brethren*;—that the Holy Spirit qualified for the work of the ministry, by the supernatural gift of

languages previously unknown, and by the visible authentication of the cloven tongue of fire upon the head, a goodly number, upon whom the Apostles' hands had not been laid;—and that Peter designates the whole of those of whom the church is composed, of course including its ministers, but applying to them only in the same respects as it does to the brethren, a holy and a royal priesthood.

It is a consolatory reflection, that the encroaching tide of usurpation, which floated upon its advancing wave the proud and richly freighted vessel of the anti-christian church, has long since reached its height, and ceased to flow. In its ebbing it has left her fairly aground, grappled also to the moorings, which in her confidence she fastened, and which in her embarrassment and perplexity she cannot unloose; while the returning stream of natural events is wearing her strength, dissolving her frame, and carrying piece after piece of her fabric away in its current. “Her tacklings are loosed, they cannot well strengthen her mast, nor spread the sail; the prey of a great spoil is divided, the lame take the prey.”

The tide, which is at present setting in upon the world with resistless force, is the tide of popular opinion, flowing through the channels which are opened by popular instruction. That any portion of the Christian church should be identified with the chartered secular rights, which are unfriendly to the interests of the people, is deeply to be regretted, and must be in-

jurious to its general interests. The church, as Christ formed and Apostles left it, instead of towering above the people, was composed of them; instead of exacting from the world, was the treasure-house of spiritual blessings to enrich it; instead of requiring the infliction on others of pains and penalties for its defence and support, was armed with patience to endure them; instead of including within it any thing which required the concealment of darkness, by its blended exhibition of Christian truth and practice, was itself the light of the world; instead of feeding on its corruptions the multiplying brood of infidelity, it was "the salt of the earth." The day of apathetic insensibility to its condition is gone. Tranquil security, in the spoil derived from its corruptions, can no longer be enjoyed. The signs of the times evidently indicate approaching inquiry, discussion, purification. Whatever may be lost in secular power and glory, will be gained in moral strength and efficiency; in the requirement of ministerial qualifications according with the scriptural standard; in the infusion of popular energy and vigour; in the relinquishment of uncharitable and offensive claims and pretensions; in the clearer exhibition of the grace, and freedom, and joyfulness of the gospel dispensation; in the harmonious co-operation of all those who hold its vital and essential principles; in the frequent interchange of communion, and occasional aggregation of separate communities, in shewing forth the Lord's death at his table;—thus, powerful in the

renewal of her primitive simplicity and knowledge, will the church again “look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”

SECTION III.

IN SEPARATION TO THE SERVICE OF GOD, THE JEWISH PEOPLE, WHEN THEY WERE OBEDIENT, WERE A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, AND CHRISTIAN PEOPLE ARE A HOLY PRIESTHOOD.

THAT the whole tribe of Levi was separated from the other tribes for the work which was to be performed in the tabernacle; that Aaron and his sons were separated from the rest of their brethren, the Levites, for the service of the altar; that the family of Aaron, in the discharge of the priestly office, might approach nearer to God than could either the people or the Levites, are admitted facts. But then, if even the high priest himself, who went annually into the holiest of all, had claimed any peculiar personal sanctity in virtue of his office, the sin-offering, which he was required previously to offer for himself and his house, would have neutralized his claim, and exposed his pretensions. No man could be separated from his fellow-men for a purpose more solemn and important, a work more interesting and sacred; no man could be to his fellow-men an object of more profound religious interest than was the Jewish high priest, when, with the blood of the sin-offering in his hand, he was

about to enter into the immediate presence of God to make atonement for the sins of the people. If ever a man were in danger of being exalted above measure by the nature of the work which he was called to perform; if ever the people were in danger of cherishing excessive veneration for an individual on account of the office which he sustained; that danger existed, in reference to the Jewish high priest. The danger, however, was foreseen and effectually guarded against by him who appointed the office. The high priest was required to acknowledge himself to be, equally with the people, a sinner against God, before he could enter into the holiest place on their behalf. They were taught, by the rites which he performed for himself and his house, not only that no merit could be transferred to them from his character and services; but also that there was no purity inherent in his person, nor infused by his office. In the annual discharge of the most impressive act of his service, he could not engage for the people, until he had himself been cleansed, by the ceremonial washing of his flesh, and the shedding and sprinkling of blood.

Corresponding with the mode by which the high priest was separated from the people, and qualified for the discharge of the most solemn act of his service, was the mode in which the people themselves had been previously separated from all other nations, and made a holy people, a kingdom of priests, to serve the Lord. Their liberation from Egypt was demanded

on the ground of a special relation which God assumed to them, and service which he required from them. "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born: and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me."* They offered their first sacrifice before they left Egypt; the head of each family killing its own lamb, and sprinkling its blood upon the posts of the door of their dwelling. They were consequently not only exempted from the stroke which cut off the first-born of the Egyptians, but were also received under the guidance, protection, and covering of the cloud of glory which was the expressive symbol of the divine presence; the cloud which afterwards consecrated the tabernacle of worship, and subsequently the temple of Solomon; and which, in contracted dimensions, became stationary between the wings of the cherubim, and over the mercy-seat. They all, when they had passed through the sea, were for ever separated from the Egyptians, and became a distinct and peculiar people. They were all baptized into the dispensation which Moses was commissioned to establish, in the cloud, and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink. They were expressly designated "the congregation of the Lord." To them, assembled in congregation, was the law delivered; were the lively oracles committed; did the

* Exod. iv. 22, 23.

service of God appertain. No language, addressed to the priests, and implying separation to God's service, can be stronger than that which is repeatedly addressed to the whole people. "For thou art a *holy* people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."*

Their holiness as a people, however, was not inherent nor self-sustained, nor at any time perfect. They were chosen above all other people, not for any excellencies which they displayed, nor for any works of righteousness which were foreseen. They came before the presence of God, not as the unstained priests of nature, with their offerings of fruits and flowers, expressive of their homage, gratitude, and tribute to him as the great Creator; but they came as sinners to a propitiatory, where a sacrifice was provided, guilt was to be confessed, punishment deprecated, pardon implored, mercy and grace obtained. The institutions of their religion implied that they needed pardon, with the same frequency and constancy, as they did their daily bread. They were supplied with manna but once every day, they were supplied with a sin-offering twice. The acknowledgment of sin, and application to the rites which were appointed for its removal, were as essential parts of their obedience to the ceremonial law, as were the abstaining from idolatry and theft

* Deut. vii. 6.

essential parts of their obedience to the moral law. The laws which related to the sacrifices for sin were enjoined by the same authority, and were equally binding with the ten commandments. To say they had no sin was to deny the truth, and impugn the essential principles of their religion, and make him a liar by whom its rites had been appointed.

It was as they carefully observed the ceremonial institutions, as well as the moral precepts of their religion, that they were cleansed from sin, and made a holy people. This was annually taught, by the appointment of the scape-goat, upon whose head the priest laid his hands, while he confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, in all their sins; putting them upon the head of the goat, and then sending him away into the wilderness, to bear them out of sight and into oblivion. What was annually taught by the sending away of the goat, was daily enjoyed by every individual, whether he worshipped in the temple, or from a distance looked towards it, who intelligently drew near to God through the medium of the continual burnt offering;—"the blessedness of the man whose transgression was forgiven, whose sin was covered; the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputed not iniquity, and in whose spirit there was no guile."

But when by the sacrifices for sin, which were either public and stated, or private, occasional, and particular, for some specified and extraordinary offence, they had

been cleansed from guilt,—then were they allowed to come in the enjoyment of acceptance and favour, and present their voluntary and grateful *peace-offerings* to the Lord. These, their own hands brought before the Lord, devoted, killed, waved the parts which were to be presented on the altar, or to be the portion of the priests; and what remained, they might themselves, with whomsoever (provided they were clean like themselves) they chose to invite to their feast, eat joyfully in the place which God had chosen. Religious privileges were thus associated and blended with festive enjoyments. The same devoted peace-offering was divided between the altar, the priest, and the offerer, with his family or friends, emblematic of the peace and fellowship which existed between God, to whom the altar was erected, the priest who officiated before it, and the people who brought their oblations to it. At the festivals, these offerings were presented in great abundance; and thus a religious character of peace and joyfulness was given, not merely to the services which they attended in the temple, but also to the tables at which they assembled in their own stated or temporary dwellings. They feasted with joyfulness before the Lord, on the free-will offerings which they brought up to the place of their general assembly, and hallowed by presentation in the temple, and division with the altar and the priest. The consideration of these facts will enable us more fully to understand, why the festivals were to the Jews, in the best periods

of their history, seasons of such lively interest and powerful excitement; why the sound of trumpets, which announced their approach and called to their celebration, was a joyful sound; why David, when he was the object of Saul's persecution, or was driven from Jerusalem by Absalom's rebellion, so pathetically bewails his exile from the place, where with the multitude he had been accustomed to keep holy day; why, in such impassioned language, he expresses the longing of his soul to return and appear before God. To the place which the Lord their God had chosen, to cause his name to dwell there, they brought their burnt-offerings and sacrifices, their tithes and the heave-offerings of their hand, and all their choice vows which they vowed unto the Lord; and there they *rejoiced* before the Lord, with their sons and daughters, and men-servants and maid-servants, and the Levite that was within their gates.* What an interesting assemblage! The superiors not happy at the expense of their inferiors,—that indeed none, who are in exalted stations, whatever efforts they may make, actually can be. No man can trample on the natural rights of those who are beneath him in society, without deranging his own moral constitution, disturbing the elements of his own peace and enjoyment, and inflicting an injury upon himself, more irreparable than that which is received by the victim of his oppression. At the

* Deut. xii. 11, 12.

festivals of God's appointment, high and low, rich and poor, masters and servants, rejoiced together; and no assembly elsewhere convened was so joyful, as "the holy flock, the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts." "Blessed were the people that knew the joyful sound! they walked, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name did they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness were they exalted." They were separated for the service of God, and joyful in his presence, as "a kingdom of priests."

Now, keeping these facts which are recorded upon the pages of the Jewish history in view, we may advance with firm and easy steps to develop the character, the work, and the blessedness of those whom Peter designates "a holy and royal priesthood." Their illumination in the knowledge of God has already come under consideration. We are now prepared to show—

I. Their calling to the service of God.

That the Apostles were called to a work which was peculiarly their own, and in which they could have no successors; that the pastors and teachers are called, and qualified, and given for the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ, by Christ himself, as the living presiding head of the body, and not by any human authorities, civil or ecclesiastical, were this the place for such a discussion, we think it would not be difficult to prove. Our object at present is to

show, that whatever offices may exist in the Christian church, and whoever may be entitled to sustain them, there is no character of sanctity stamped upon them, which is not common to the calling of all the brethren, of which the church universal is composed.

That, whatever titles, powers, and virtues, which were unknown to the Apostles, men may have assumed to themselves in the church, any are actually superior in office to them, will by no one be pretended. His holiness the pope himself professes to claim only equality with Peter. That the Apostles understood the nature of their own office and of the ministry generally, and knew how to discriminate between what was common and what was holy, will also at once be admitted. Now it is a singular fact, that while there is not a word about "holy orders" in the New Testament, and the epithet holy is but once or twice employed to designate the Apostles themselves; it is applied as the common designation of the brethren of the church. They are "*holy* brethren;" "*holy* brethren," who are "partakes of a heavenly calling;" who are "saved and called with a *holy* calling;" who are "chosen that they should be *holy* and without blame;" who are exhorted in prayer "to lift up *holy* hands;" "to present their bodies a living sacrifice, *holy* and acceptable to God;" whose bodies are *holy*, because they are the temple of God; who are "a *holy* priesthood." The persons who in any considerable degree embodied these descriptions, could certainly need no other character of

sanctity impressed upon them, to whatever work they might be called. From amongst these holy brethren the first ministers of the church were chosen ; but instead of acquiring a new character of sanctity, by virtue of any rites performed on their separation to the ministerial work, it was required that they should be already holy ; that they should give proof of their personal interest and right to the designations which were applied generally to the members of the church, as an essential pre-requisite to their choice and ordination. “Lay hands suddenly on no man,” was the charge of Paul to his son Timothy. Know that a man *is* holy and qualified for the work, before your hands assist in setting him apart to it. If a man, before he enters on the ministerial work, is not already holy, all the rites which men or angels could discharge at his ordination, would have no power to make him so. If he is pre-viously holy, no rational and intelligent men will pretend, with great formality and pomp of circumstance, to confer that which is already possessed.—“Why look ye so earnestly upon us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk ? was the question of Peter in reference to the cripple which had been healed. In what language, were he to return to the world, would he address those, who, by virtue of power and holiness which they pretend to have derived from him, through a stream which has been flowing for nearly eighteen centuries, undertake to impress *an indelible character of sanc-*

tity upon their fellow-men, and to roll the stream onward, still deepening and widening, to the end of time? Would he not, like Paul and Barnabas on another occasion, rend his clothes, and run in amongst them, crying out and saying, *Sirs, why do ye these things? We also were men of like passions with others, and preached unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, and Jesus Christ his Son; who, when he ascended up on high, gave gifts, in rich variety, to men; and from whom still, and whom alone, all living streams of ministerial authority and grace descend.**

* On the subject of holy orders, the following observations of Dr. Campbell deserve serious consideration:

“On every occurrence the pastors had taken care to improve the respect of the lower ranks, by widening the distance between their own order and the conditions of their christian brethren; and for this purpose had early broached a distinction, which, in process of time, universally prevailed, of the whole Christian commonwealth into clergy and laity. The terms are derived from two Greek words; *κληρος*, lot or inheritance; and *λαος*, people. The plain intention was, to suggest, that the former,—the pastors or clergy,—for they appropriated the term *κληρος* to themselves, were selected and contradistinguished from the multitude, as being in the present world, by way of eminence, God’s *peculium*, or special inheritance.

“It is impossible to conceive a claim, in appearance more arrogant, or in reality worse founded. God is in-

The holiness of the true members of Christ's church, which they possess in common with those who are properly qualified, and authorized to minister to them, is like that which was possessed by those who, of old, were Israelites indeed,—graciously imparted and divinely sustained. Their calling, though a holy calling, is not according to their own works, but according to God's purpose and grace, given them in Christ Jesus before the world began. Their first purification from sin is derived from the efficacy of the blood of Christ, which, applied by the power of the Holy Spirit, pur-

deed, in the Old Testament, said to be the inheritance of the Levites, because a determined share of the sacrifices and offerings, made to God, was, in part, to serve them instead of an estate in land, such as was given to each of the other tribes. But, I pray you, mark the difference; no where is the tribe of Levi called God's inheritance, though that expression is repeatedly used of the whole nation. Concerning the whole Israelitish nation, Moses, who was himself a Levite, says, in an address to God, (Deut. ix. 29,) 'They are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power.' The words, in the Septuagint translation, deserve our particular attention: οὗτοι λαός σου καὶ κληρὸς σου οὕς ἐξήγαγες, ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου ἐν τῇ ἰσχύϊ σου τῇ μεγάλῃ. The same persons are, in the same sentence, declared to be both the λαός and the κληρὸς. What! says the canonist, at once laymen and clergy? that is certainly absurd! the characters are incompatible! Yet it did not then appear so to

ges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. And though more abundant supplies of spiritual influences are promised under the New Testament dispensation than were enjoyed under the Old, a higher moral standard is presented, and a progressive advance towards perfection is enjoined ; yet those Christians who are the most enlightened and matured, will be ever ready to adopt the language of Paul, as expressive of the estimate which they form of their own character : “ Not as though I had already attained,

Moses. Now would it be thought reasonable or just that what was allowed to be the privilege and the glory of every Israelite under the more servile establishment of Moses, should, under the more liberal dispensation of the gospel, be disclaimed by all those disciples of Jesus who have not been admitted into the sacred order, which they, for this reason, have called clerical ?

“ It is somewhat extraordinary that, in the choice of distinctions, which the church rulers so soon showed a disposition to affect, they should have paid almost as little attention to the style as they did to the spirit and meaning of the sacred books.

“ In after ages they even improved upon their predecessors. The schoolmen (a modest race, all clergymen) thought it was doing the laymen too much honour to derive the name from *λαὸς*, *populus*. It suited them better to derive it from *λάζας*, *lapis*, a stone.”—*Campbell's Lectures on Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. I. pp. 297—299, 303.

either were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." As our first coming to Christ will be for an interest in the work which he performs, as the atoning sacrifice and interceding priest ; so every subsequent approach to him, through every stage and step of our Christian career, will regard him in the same character and office, and for the same purpose—the cleansing of the soul from the defilement, which, dwelling in an atmosphere which is polluted, it must perpetually contract. The exercise of faith in Christ as our priest, necessarily involving the acknowledgment of sin, and having for its object the obtainment of pardon, is as essential a part of the Christian religion, as is the exercise of love to God and man. Faith is indeed the root, out of which love and every other grace of the Christian character springs, and to whose virtue, though itself unseen, all the fruits of righteousness which adorn the life must be ascribed. As by the efficacy of Christ's priestly work, brought into the heart by the power of his Spirit, we are made and kept holy for God's service on earth ; so, by the final and complete act of its application, while the soul is disentangling itself from the cumbrous clog of mortality, is every remaining vestige of defilement cleansed away ; and it awakes in his likeness, and enters his presence, to unite in the fervent ascriptions of the redeemed, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us

kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."*

II. Their access to the presence of God.

A distinction in this privilege existed under the law between the priests and the people. Though into the courts of the people uncircumcised Gentiles could not enter, and as compared with them the congregation of the Lord assembled for his service was a kingdom of priests, yet into the court where the sons of Aaron ministered the people might not enter ; and to draw aside the vail, and pass over the threshold of the holiest of all was allowed to the high priest only, and to him but once in a year. But no such distinction as this exists under the New Testament dispensation. No class of men, no one favoured individual, is privileged beyond others in the mode of access to God, in proximity to the mercy-seat, and the presence of his glory ; or has any right whatever, on the ground of official separation, to say to another, " Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am more holy than thou." One new and living way of access is opened, for all who are willing to draw nigh. The invitations suppose, that we are all equally destitute of righteousness and strength, and exhort us with boldness, inspired by the name and work of our great High Priest, to come,

* Rev. i. 5, 6.

that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in time of need ; and the same Lord over all, is equally nigh unto all that call upon him.

The priests under the law were allowed to come nearer to God than the people, not on account of any superior personal sanctity, which by descent they derived, for they needed equally with the people the cleansing virtue of the daily sacrifices which they offered ; but, because in the offering of those sacrifices, and the presentation of the incense which was associated with them, they typified the work of Christ, who is undefiled and separate from sinners, who stands as Mediator between us and God, and reconciles us to him. When he entered on the discharge of his office, their work was superseded ; and with the abolition of the order to which they belonged, and the desecration of the place in which they served, was there an abolition of all *official* distinctions in proximity to God, and sanctity in his service. The way into the holiest of all, which had not been made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing, was now laid open, not to be the privileged and secluded path of a new official priesthood, but to be the highway of the redeemed of the Lord. The unclean, whatever official distinctions they may wear, cannot pass over it ; but the redeemed can walk there, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, errs not therein. The holy brethren, whom the Apostle addresses in the Epistle to the Hebrews, are exhorted habitually to use it, in language which con-

tains an obvious allusion to the purification by which the high priest was prepared for entering the place of communion on the day of atonement, and identifying them in privilege with him. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our *hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*"* The Apostle associates himself with the brethren, and calls them to a common participation in that which he felt to be his own most exalted privilege. And those, who in their devotional exercises may accompany with equal steps the bold ascent of the Apostle, and enter "into the holiest" with the same liberty which the Jewish high priest enjoyed on the day of his most solemn service, may well be entitled to the designation—"a holy" and "a royal priesthood."

Before the priesthood was established, and the tabernacle set up, the whole of the people were received under the cloud of glory, which was the symbol of the divine presence, and to which, after the polity was settled, and the tribes fixed in their inheritance, the high priest only might approach. A remarkable prediction, however, was given by Isaiah, which, while it

* Heb. x. 19—22.

threw its radiance over the future, borrowed its language and kindled its cheering light from the past: "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud of smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence."* This prediction, had it been fulfilled literally, would have given to all who at the period to which it referred, dwelt or assembled on Mount Zion, the permanent enjoyment of the privilege which was possessed by that generation that was separated from the Egyptians, and led by the presence and power of divine glory into the wilderness. That it has hitherto received no literal accomplishment, will by all be admitted. That the favour and protection which were afforded to the Jews after their return from the captivity of Babylon, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, did not complete the prediction and exhaust the fulness of the promise, few will deny. May we not then claim it as a part of the rich inheritance which was bequeathed by the prophets of the New Testament church;—as one of the exceeding great and precious promises which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus? If so, it brings the substance of what the Jews possessed only the expressive symbol,—the glory of the divine presence,—around the dwellings and assemblies of the spiritual priesthood; and in their closets, their

* Isaiah iv. 5.

families, and their sanctuaries of public worship, they habitually minister before God with the liberty, dignity, acceptance, and favour which the high priest enjoyed, when he went to the mercy-seat in the holiest place. And thus do they receive the fulfilment of another of Isaiah's predictions, frequently claimed by an official priesthood, but evidently, from the connexion in which it stands, given to the church, and therefore corresponding in its application with the passage which we have quoted from Peter,—“But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord: men shall call you the ministers of our God.”*

That official ministry is the most truly dignified and efficient, and gives the clearest proof of its divine call and appointment, by which the blessings and privileges of the common salvation are most clearly opened for the instruction, improvement, and consolation of the people. Those who would shut up, for the purpose of enriching a privileged order, what God has thrown open for the supply of the whole church, labour to obstruct the path which leads to the fountain of life, instead of going forth with the proclamation, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”†—“The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let

* Isaiah lxi. 6.

† Isaiah lv. 1.

him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”*

III. The sacrifices which they offer to God.

Sacrifice and offering for sin they have none to present, no command to provide any, no acceptance if they profess to have devised any. Christ their pass-over has been sacrificed for them. He, the Lamb of God, has superseded the continual burnt-offering. He, the great High Priest, has entered into the holiest place with the blood of the one perfect universal sin offering; and those, who by its efficacy are cleansed from their guilt, have only to come to the feast which the Lord of hosts has made *for all people*, bringing their peace-offerings, their thank-offerings, their free-will offerings, that they may rejoice together before the Lord. Of these offerings there are—

The sacrifices,—the free-will offerings of the hand.

“But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such *sacrifices* God is well pleased.”† In some cases under the law, the sacrifices were graduated in their scale of value, in order to meet the circumstances of those who were unable to present a costly offering. Thus the mother of our Lord, when he was presented in the temple at her purification, not

* Rev. xxii. 17.

† Heb. xiii. 16.

being able to bring the more expensive sacrifice of a lamb for a burnt offering, with a bird for the sin-offering, availed herself of the liberty allowed in the law, to present "a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons." He who was brought into the temple as the son of the lowly, has so graduated the scale of free-will offerings in the gospel, as to bring them within the power of those who occupy the humblest stations in society; and has declared their acceptance to result, not from the costliness of the gift, but from the nature of the principle by which the offerer is influenced. That a spirit of elevating and expansive liberality might be diffused through every part of the Christian church; that no invidious distinctions might obtain; that none might be excluded from the opportunity of realizing the truth of his own saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" the contribution of the widow's two mites has been recorded and published with commendation, by his command, while the gracious assurance also has been made, "That a cup of cold water, given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward." An operative faith in this declaration, may infuse the peace and joyfulness of a religious service, known to be well pleasing to God, into the daily experience of every individual of which the church universal is composed. There are ever within our reach members of Christ's flock, who may be benefited by some services which we are able to perform. Let the cardinal virtues of the Chris-

tian character be cultivated, and become habitual in their exercise ; *faith*, appropriating the efficacy of the atonement, and bringing into the heart the peace which passeth all understanding ; *charity*, working in diligent obedience to the precept, “As ye have opportunity do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith ;” *hope*, fixed on the gracious reward which the Saviour will confer when he will say, “Forasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me,” and then we may live in the enjoyment of a perpetual festival,—a life of heaven upon earth. “Walking in the light, as God is in the light, we shall have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, will cleanse us from all sin.”

The Apostle was not ashamed to acknowledge, that he derived his support from the *free-will* communication, in temporal things, of those to whom he had communicated in spiritual things ; and he dwells with pleasure on the fact, because there was in it a development of Christian principle, the sowing of the seed which would produce fruit unto life eternal. “Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift : but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound : I am full,

having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a *sacrifice* acceptable, well pleasing to God.”* It is true, that some of the churches were deficient in the presentation of these sacrifices, but in what way did the Apostle endeavour to correct the evil? Not by recommending compulsory measures, which supersede the necessity of religious principle, which prevent its growth, and make it wither at the root; but by stating such considerations as were adapted to work on Christian motives, and call them into vigorous, but voluntary exercise. “Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other Apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you

* Phil. iv. 15—18.

spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.* It may be safely affirmed, that he, who would not employ his apostolic power, which was spiritual in its character, to secure his own temporal supply, would never have sanctioned an application to the civil power, whose weapons are carnal, for a general and compulsory ministerial provision;—that he, who drew so broad a distinction between serving at the altar and preaching the gospel, would never have allowed in ministers of the gospel, the Jewish pretensions of a right to tithes;—that he, who exhorted his son Timothy to “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” would never have committed a mistake like that into which Hannibal fell, and have suffered the army of the cross to quarter where sloth might be in-

* 1 Cor. ix. 4—15.

dulged, and its moral strength be enfeebled;—that he, who was so concerned for the clear manifestation of the truth to men’s consciences, would never have approved a system, which, by alluring men who know not the truth into the office of the ministry, operates as an authorized bounty upon formality, worldly-mindedness, and error;—that he, who so scrupulously avoided doing any thing that might “hinder the gospel,” would never have countenanced those exactions of the unrighteous mammon, which neutralize the efficacy of the best instructions, alienate the hearts of the people, confirm the prejudices of unbelievers, and convey the morbid infection which corrupts and paralyses the vital energy of the church. “Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.”* This, in reference to ministerial support, is the apostolic precept, clear, definite, binding upon the conscience, and comprising the substance of all which the New Testament contains upon the subject. It is a precept, too, which is strictly consonant with every dictate of reason and principle of equity; but then, it is as much beyond the province of human legislatures, and their power, properly to enforce, as is the precept, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, that do ye also unto them.” The effort, however, has been made, and the principles on which the legislation has proceeded, as well as the results which have followed, deserve to be noticed.

* Gal. vi. 6.

In acts of legislation, the object of which was to provide for the temporal support of those who, by office, were bound to be teachers to their fellow-men, and where, consequently, every step should have been clear as the light, and settled on principles unshaken as the rock ; two essential mistakes were made, either of which, so far as Christianity is concerned, vitiates the whole proceeding. The provision was made for them on the Jewish model, in a character and office which they had no right to sustain ; as priests, who, having a work to perform similar to that which was discharged by those who officiated in the Jewish temple, were entitled to the same kind of support. And then, besides that the precedent which was followed had no authority whatever in the case to which it was applied, there was a serious departure from the precedent itself, in the power that was given to enforce the payment of tithes by legal prosecution, and civil penalties. Under the legal Jewish dispensation, there was nothing between the offerer and receiver, but the plain and explicit command of God ; so that the payment was purely a religious service. Under the more liberal and spiritual Christian dispensation, there is between the people and the priest, as a substitute for the command of God, all the power and authority of the secular arm, and that arm employed under ecclesiastical direction, for the laudable purpose of binding a Jewish burden upon Christian shoulders, and for converting that which, among the Jews, was a religious duty, in-

to a matter of mere civil obligation and commercial arrangement ; frequently grievous to one party concerned in the transaction, and not seldom morally injurious to the other.

The results which have followed have been as unhappy, as the principles on which the legislation proceeded were unsound. The tithe, instead of the service, has too commonly been the inducement to seek "holy orders;" and they have been obtained by many, whom "schools dismissed and colleges, untaught" themselves in the word, and who, consequently, were totally incompetent to teach others. In many cases, where the good things exacted have been sufficient to support the receiver in affluence, and where, consequently, on all the principles of equity, the most strenuous efforts should have been made, and the most entire devotedness have been displayed, he has not given himself the trouble to attempt to teach the contributors, but has devolved the work, with a small pittance of the hire, upon the hands of a substitute. Where any of the people, unable to find in the instructions of the establishment that which their spiritual wants required, or conscientiously differing from its constitution and forms, have left its communion, and have chosen pastors of their own, to whom they cheerfully render their voluntary offerings ; though they receive no teaching in the word from the legalized incumbent or his substitute, yet is every ecclesiastical exaction enforced, from the golden fleece down to the

Easter pence ; not, it is true, because the clergyman for the time being is mercenary, but because he is bound in conscience to allow the revenues of the church to suffer no damage. But, perhaps, the most serious injury of the whole, and which most deeply affects the general interests of Christianity, is, that too many of those who remain in the establishment, tranquilly conclude, that the state has provided them with a religion, and secured its ample support, and that to interest themselves about its nature, or make any efforts for its extension, is, on their parts, altogether unrequired and unnecessary. These may be unwelcome, but they are not exaggerated facts. In what way the injustice and opprobrium which they involve are to be remedied, it may not be easy, while the influential part of the clergy are more concerned for the wealth than for the character and spiritual efficiency of the church, to show. A ministry truly apostolic in its principles and spirit, would effectuate a remedy at once, would spontaneously withdraw its reliance for support upon the strength of the secular arm, and safely trust to the providence of God, and the grateful and affectionate liberality of those to whom they minister. He who *labours* would then receive the reward ; there would be opportunity afforded for religious principle to develope itself ; and pastor and people mutually and freely reciprocating each to the other its own peculiar good, might rejoice together before the Lord in the present enjoyment of his goodness, and the anticipation of their mutual reward.

That there is more activity and vigour in those religious communities in our country which are unendowed, than there is in that which enjoys the patronage of the state; that the former, with all their apparent disadvantages, thrive, while the latter, with its powerful monopoly of learning, wealth, and secular distinctions, is yearly decaying in its strength and influence, cannot be denied. In producing these opposite and paradoxical results, there are doubtless several causes which concur; but may not one of the principal reasons be, that there is not in the Episcopal communion, on account of its being endowed by the state, any necessity for awakening the dormant energies of its members, and enlisting, for the support and extension of the system, those feelings of interest and watchful care which are called forth when voluntary pecuniary support has been rendered? When an individual has become a voluntary contributor to any religious object, it subsequently assumes an importance in his estimation, which it did not before possess; and so long as it commends itself to his judgment, will have a hold upon his feelings which it could in no other way obtain. There is a twofold security enjoyed in those religious communities which are supported by voluntary contribution, that more than counterbalances all the disadvantages, which, in other respects, they may sustain;—a security against corruption, the suspicion of the existence of which is sufficient to withdraw the resources, by which only it could be

fed ;—a security, while uncorrupted, of the hearts and energies, as well as names and persons, of those who unite in its support. Those would prove themselves the best friends of the Episcopal church, who would endeavour to extricate her from that alliance, and withdraw her from those endowments which secularize her spirit, fetter her liberty, and weaken her moral strength. Episcopacy maintains itself in Scotland amid the indignant recollections and inveterate prejudices of the people, and under the jealous discountenance of the authorities in the state. In republican America, an ungenial climate, where, like every other religious system, it is unfettered and uncontaminated by political interference, it is said to flourish and increase. It is only in England, its native soil and friendly atmosphere, where wealth, learning, antiquity, the deeply-rooted prejudices of hereditary habits, rank, and royalty are on its side,—where it lifts its mitred head in courts and parliaments, that it withers and decays. And why? Chiefly, because in opposition to the genius of the gospel, to the principles of equity, to the common sense of those who, freed from the shackles of interest or prejudice, think upon the question for themselves, it is supported by compulsory exactions, which cannot but be offensive to the multitudes which are beyond its pale ; and which operate rather as a narcotic than a stimulant on those who remain within.

When the fountain of Christian liberality has been

once fairly opened, not only are its streams more pure and fertilizing than are those which move only as they are forced; but they flow also more rapidly and extensively abroad. It deserves to be mentioned, that during the past year, (1828-9,) by those denominations of Christians which support their own varied and numerous institutions at home, and contribute with others their share towards the maintenance of the religion of the state, 90,010*l.* were expended in missionary exertions among the heathen; while during the same period, and for the same purposes, that denomination, which certainly comprises the wealth of the country, and towards whose religious instruction the less affluent dissenters are compelled to pay, the sum expended was 67,528*l.** Is it for the *honour*,—can it be for the *advantage* of episcopacy, as a religious system, that things should continue as they are? Surely those whose love to episcopacy is founded in *religious principle*, and among whom are many as truly excellent, as honourable, as liberal, as devoted, as ever it was the happiness of any church to include in her communion, will exert themselves to redeem it from the ruin,

* There are certain societies which are supported in common by Churchmen and Dissenters, as the British and Foreign Bible Society; the British and Foreign School Society; the Religious Book and Tract Societies; from these delightful specimens of Christian co-operation, we can derive but little light to assist us in our present obser-

which, if left to the short-sighted policy of those whose attachment is founded only in a love to *secular advantages*, must inevitably befall. How much might be accomplished for the true interests of episcopacy, for the union of the various departments of the holy catholic church, for the general interests of christianity at home

vations. Let us, however, turn to the distinct efforts made by each great body for the diffusion of Christianity abroad, as affording data for comparison.

EPISCOPAL MISSIONARY SOCIETIES.

Sums actually subscribed in the United Kingdom for 1828-9

	£	s.	d.
Society for promoting Christian Knowledge—			
<i>Foreign objects</i>	9,208	9	5
Society for Propagating the Gospel	6,239	10	5
Church Missionary Society	52,080	19	1
	<hr/>		
	£67,525	18	11
	<hr/>		

DISSENTING MISSIONARY SOCIETIES.

Sums actually subscribed in the United Kingdom for 1828-9

	£	s.	d.
Wesleyan Methodists	41,846	12	10
London Missionary Society	37,207	0	6
Particular Baptist Missionary Society	9,305	10	2
General Baptist ditto	1,651	1	6
	<hr/>		
	£90,010	5	0
	<hr/>		

Supplement to Cong. Mag. 1829.

and abroad, if, renouncing the alliance by which it is fettered, the endowments by which it is secularized, and the uncharitable assumptions by which it is dishonoured, the Church of England became entirely Protestant in its character, and the resources of wealth, learning, and piety, which it includes, were brought under the operation of the same vigorous, because voluntary and popular principles, which obtain in other communions. Let it be remembered, that not only in the apostolic age, but for the first three centuries, the Christian ministry was supported, and the Christian church extended, by the voluntary sacrifices of the hand; that Christian principle, where it is the object of the ministry to cherish and nurture it, still develops itself in the same way, and for the same purposes; and that the fruit produced abounds to the account of those by whom it is brought forth.

There are the sacrifices of the lip.

“By him (Christ) therefore let us offer the *sacrifice* of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”* And when the ground of acceptance is understood, and we enjoy peace with God by the blood of the cross, coming to it *as the one spiritual altar*,† of the virtue of whose perfect sacrifice all Christians partake, and by which

* Heb. xiii. 15.

† Heb. xiii. 10.

all the oblations that they present are hallowed for their own enjoyment and God's complacent regard; they may rejoice evermore, and in every thing give thanks. In this way, the sacrifices of the Christian church become as much more frequent and numerous as they are more spiritual, than those which were offered under the law. The prayers of each individual member of the church "are set forth before God as incense, and the lifting up of the hands as the evening sacrifice." And thus, in proportion as the Christian church extends its boundaries, the prediction of Malachi receives its accomplishment. "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."* And at length the world, filled with the knowledge of the Lord, will become as God's holy mountain of Jerusalem, where only sacrifices could at one time be offered: in it no hurting or destroying, but all its nations, tribes, and families approaching the one christian altar, the cross, and abiding under the shadow of the divine presence, shall minister before their common God and Father, a holy priesthood; giving thanks always for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, presenting spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by him. Who, with the pros-

* Mal. i. 11.

pect of the pleasing scene before him, can refrain from lifting up his heart in fervent prayer to God, and employing the language prepared by the pen of inspiration for our use, and referring to the consummation so devoutly to be wished ; “ God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, that thy name may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee ; O let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee ; then shall the earth yield her increase, and God even our own God shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”

God, before whom the holy priesthood now ministers, separated to his service, and touching no unclean thing, acknowledges and regards them as the children of his family, sends his Spirit into their hearts, as the spirit of adoption, promises them an inheritance and crown of glory, calls them heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ; and thus a character is impressed upon them, unknown to the Jewish people, or the Jewish priests ; they are a *royal* priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, showing forth his praise, who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. In this way are they training on earth for the ministrations of the celestial temple, the worship presented in which was opened to the wondering eyes and ravished ears

of the beloved disciple ; “ And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof ; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests : and we shall reign on the earth.”*

We have now reached the close of our subject, and are prepared to contemplate the harmony of its parts, and to estimate the amount of their consolidated strength. We have seen, that Levitical terms are never employed to describe the privileges or work of the Christian ministry, and consequently that all the pretensions of those who profess to discharge the functions of an official priesthood in the Christian church, are totally unauthorized, and nugatory ; that their work is incongruous with the Christian dispensation, and incompatible with the character of those who are completely qualified to teach what that dispensation really is. We have seen that Christ has embodied in his work the types which were presented in the office and ritual of the Old Testament priesthood ; that he has entered, as the exclusive Priest of the New Testament dispensation, into the true temple, which, because it is in heaven, can never be desecrated, nor its service be at any time suspended ; that in his work there is

* Rev. v. 9, 10.

found the completeness and perpetuity, the universal and unailing efficacy, which the possession of divine perfections must necessarily impart. We have seen, that all those who come to God for spiritual blessings by him, whatever minor differences may prevail amongst them, or by whatever instrumentality they have been brought where peace and reconciliation are enjoyed ; become themselves, in the same respects as the Jews, when obedient, were a kingdom of priests, a holy priesthood. Their coming to God by Jesus Christ is the result of their being enlightened in the knowledge of him ; is followed by the application of the blood which cleanseth them from sin ; the effusion of the spiritual influence which sanctifies and separates for God's service ; the acceptance of the spiritual sacrifices which in that service are presented ; the liberty to come with them into the holiest ; and to rejoice while offering them in the overshadowing glory of the divine presence. So that while Levitical terms are not employed to describe the privileges and work of the Christian ministry, they are explicitly and repeatedly employed to describe the privileges and work of the Christian people. By them, in common with their ministers, are presented the sacrifices of the lip. By them, and amongst other purposes for the temporal support of their ministers, are presented the sacrifices of the hand ; while they are recognized as the substantial body of the church, and are regarded, watched over, and fed, with the sincere milk of the

word, not for filthy lucre's sake, but because they are the flock which Christ hath purchased by his own most precious blood.

Let it not be supposed, that we wish to depreciate the value of the Christian ministry. That is in fact the result of the short-sighted policy of those who claim for it what God has not given, and endeavour to exalt its titles and dignities on the desecration of what is called the laity. They have so far lowered its intellectual character, as to make it the snug convenience, and comfortable shelter, of that son in the family of whose advancement in any other profession no hope can be entertained. They have so far lowered its moral character, as to make it the scorn of the infidel, and the jest of the profane. The work of the Christian ministry is the most important and dignified which can be entrusted to mortal hands; *because* it is the instrumentality by which those who compose the holy and royal priesthood are called from darkness to light, are formed a peculiar people, are taught and incited to offer spiritual sacrifices, and be zealous of good works. By how much the privileges of the people are exalted, by so much must the mind of him who is to unfold those privileges be enriched and expanded. The ritual service of the priest is a mere bodily exercise, for the discharge of which corporeal faculties only are required; the office of the ministry requires those which are intellectual, moral, and spirit-

ual, in all their concentration and vigour. For the work of a priest, an acquaintance with missals and pontificals only is essential; for the work of the ministry, there must be a familiar acquaintance with the word of God, an illumination of the mind in the knowledge of Christ, a determination to glory only in his cross. For a priest, it is sufficient that he be able to read the forms which are prepared to his hand; a minister must be able and apt to teach. A priest may be easily trained for the perfect performance of his functions before he enters on their discharge, and in the beaten track of his prescribed ceremonial engagements, no subsequent improvement can be displayed; a minister must diligently cultivate every faculty with which he is endowed, and improve every advantage that is within his reach; must "give himself wholly to his work, that his profiting may appear unto all." The work to which he is called, is not the establishing of the prerogatives and privileges of his own order, but the exhibition of the grace and glory of Christ. He is to preach Christ, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. The true dignity of the ministry is seen, not in the splendid orders, vestments, and emoluments of a hierarchy; but in the moral elevation of an instructed, enlightened, and holy people. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?" asks the Apostle, when writing to the Thessalonians; "are not even ye, in the presence of the Lord Jesus,

and at his coming? for ye are our glory and our joy." Those, who in this spirit labour to instruct and improve the people of their pastoral charge, preaching the word, and being instant in season and out of season, make full proof of their ministry, have with them the promised presence and blessing of the great Head of the church, and when he, the chief Shepherd, shall appear, will receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away. A reference to that day, in which the distinctions and emoluments now associated with the offices that men sustain, will have departed, and the responsibility which they involved only will appear; in which the mitre and the diadem will be consumed, and it will be known who wore them only by the account they will be required to give to him who is Lord of all; in which some will awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt; a reference to that day dissipates the illusions that collect around us in the earthly atmosphere in which at present we dwell; and conscience, if its voice be listened to, admonishes us of the fact, that it is what is moral and spiritual, self-denying and laborious, not what is merely ritual, and official, and dignified in the eyes of our fellow-men, which will bear the scrutiny, and receive the public approval of the righteous and infallible Judge. "They that be wise," as he was who said, "yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," "shall shine as the brightness of the firma-

ment, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." To bear the scrutiny of that day, the ministerial work must not only rest upon the right foundation, but its superstructure also must be composed of approved materials. "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."*

As we have no wish to depreciate the value of the Christian ministry, so neither have we any desire to increase, or encourage uncharitable divisions in the church. The principles which we have advocated, are those which make for peace: and holding which, while we walk in the clear light of truth, and the en-

* 1 Cor. iii. 9—15.

joyment of the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, we may look around us in the exercise of the most fervent and expansive charity. Where the truth as it is in Jesus is held, charity cannot be confined within the narrow boundaries of any section of the Christian community, but will be extended to the whole catholic church. That church is composed, not restrictively of those only who adopt certain ceremonial observances, for which there is no prescription in the word of God, and who wear the livery of an outward uniformity; but of all those, wherever they are found, and by whatever name they may be called, who are taught of God to rely on one atonement, to approach him as their reconciled Father, through one Mediator, to separate themselves from whatever is sinful in the world, for his service, and to present spiritual sacrifices acceptable to him through Jesus Christ. Those who hold other principles may say, Grace be with all those who love and adopt our venerable forms and rituals; we say, yea rather, "Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Those who hold other principles, may promise peace and safety to all who participate in the efficacy of the sacraments which they administer; we conclude that grace and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, will be with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. "For the *scripture* saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between

the Jew and the Greck: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* Those who hold other principles, may follow in the steps of the disciples when they knew but imperfectly the nature of the dispensation which they were destined afterwards to open in its freedom and glory, and but little understood the spirit which their master would approve; and therefore said to him, “We saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us:”† we would rather breathe the spirit of him, who, labouring to be accepted of his Master, and serving him in the noon-day light of the gospel, said, “What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoyce, yea, and will rejoyce.”‡ Those who hold other principles may rank themselves under the names of different leaders in the church, and may divide on perplexing questions which have been controverted till all parties are wearied with the discussion, without producing a conclusion in which there can be a general agreement; we have endeavoured to exhibit in their due prominence, the essential truths in which those who differ on many other disputed points are one, and which present a platform sufficiently defined, extensive, privileged, and firm, for a general union in heart and hand of all

* Rom. x. 11—13.

† Mark ix. 38.

‡ Phil. i. 18.

in every part of the church, who answer the apostolic description of the true circumcision; “Which worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”* We have laid open to the view, not only the privileges and work of the holy priesthood, but also the materials,—the lively stones of which the spiritual house is constructed; that, which built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. How elevated is the ground on which it stands. How capacious its extent. How easy the access to it. How widely to every quarter of the world, and for every family of mankind, do its gates open; they are never shut day nor night. How impregnable its walls, and secure the shelter which they afford. How fresh and full the fountains of enjoyment which spring and flow within it. How bright the cloud of glory by which it is overshadowed. How free and dignified the worshippers which enter. How melodious and acceptable the songs of praise with which it perpetually resounds. Angels behold it with admiration at the manifold wisdom of its builder, and the blessedness of the people who walk in it, and fly with prompt and cheerful wings, to minister for them as heirs of salvation. It is God’s own work, and must stand with undecaying strength, and ever brightening lustre, till the consum-

* Phil. iii. 3.

mation of all things shall arrive; and then will be seen the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

How different the artificial structure,—the hierarchy which man has reared. That rises order upon order with all incongruous materials and diverse styles, and altitude unmeasurably high. The builders of the mystic Babylon did actually accomplish, that which their less fortunate predecessors only attempted. They reared for themselves a tower whose top reached to the heavens. Those, who in succession sat enthroned on its summit, did for a while make darkness their pavilion, and assume the titles of the Most High. They grasped with mortal hand the flaming bolt, and made “fire to come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men.” Their voice rolled in thunder, and the prostrate world trembled with awe before them. But the darkness of the night of terror has been chased away, and the unwelcome light of day has cast its withering beams upon them. The wand of the Prince of Magicians has been broken, and the arm, palsied with age, which waves the fragment that remains, only beats the air in the presence of derision and scorn. The control of the elements is lost, and the power which once ruled them has repeatedly become the victim of their rage. The winds from above are vexing and crumbling the summit of the Babel. The floods from beneath are washing and wasting its foundations. The clumsy

frame-work of its structure is disjointed, and it trembles and totters to its fall ; like a great mill-stone cast into the sea, with violence will it be thrown down, and be found no more at all.

FINIS.



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